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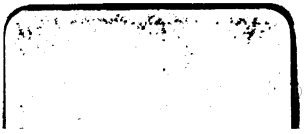

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CHANDOS

A Novel.

By OUIDA,

AUTHOR OF "STRATHMORE," "GRANVILLE DE VIGNE," &c.

God and man and hope abandon me,
But I to them and to myself remain
Constant.

SHELLEY.

Treason doth never prosper. What's the reason?
Why, when it prospers, none dare call it treason!

SIR JOHN HARRINGTON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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CHANDOS.

PROEM.

TWO VOWS.

It was the sultry close of a midsummer night in the heart of London.

In all the narrow streets about Westminster, and stretching downward to the dens of the City or the banks of the river, there were the roar of traffic and the glare of midnight; the throngs were jostling each other; the unscreened gas-jets of the itinerant stalls were flaring yellow in the stillness of the air; the screaming of ballad-singers pierced shrilly above the incessant noise of wheels; the shouting of costermongers, butchers, oyster vendors, and fried fish sellers, added its uproar to the pandemonium; and the steam and stench of hot drinks and of rotting vegetables blent with the heaviness of smoke borne down by the heat and the tempestuous oppression of

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the night. Above, the sky was dark, and little illumined by the crescent of a young and golden moon; but across the darkness now and then, across the narrow strip that piled roofs and towering spires and crushed-up walls alone gave sight of, a falling star shot swiftly down the clouds—in fleeting memento and reminder of all the glorious world of forest and of lake, of rushing river and of deep fern glades, of leafy shelter lying cool in mountain shadows, and of sea waves breaking upon wet brown rocks, which lay beyond, and were forgotten here, in the stress of trade, in the strife of crowds, in the cramped toil of poverty, and in the wealth of mingled nations. Few in town that night looked up at the shooting star as it flashed its fiery passage above the dull, leaden, noxious, gas-lit streets; none, indeed, except perhaps here and there a young dreamer, with threadbare coat and mad but sweet ambitions for all that was impossible —or some woman, haggard, painted, half drunk, whose aching eyes were caught by it, and whose sodden memory went wearily back to a long-buried childhood, when the stars were out over the moorland of a cottage home, and childish wonder had watched them rise over the black edge of ricks through the little lozenge of the lattice, and sleep had come under their light, happily, innocently, haunted by no terrors, to the clear music of a mother's spinning-song. Save these, none thought of the star as it dropped down above the jagged wilderness of roofs; the crowd was

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looking elsewhere—to the lighted entrance of the Lower House. The ministers who sat in the Commons were about to leave, after a night of unusual national interest.

The multitude had gathered thickly, swollen by every passer-by who, drawn into the vortex, had hung on the outskirts of the concourse, and stopped in turn to pause and stare, and hear the gossip of St. Stephen's. There had been, as it was known, a powerful and heated debate, a political crisis of decisive eminence—of some peril, moreover, to the country, from a rash war policy which had been urged upon the existing ministry, which must, it had been feared, have resigned to escape stooping to measures forced on it by the opposition; the false position had been avoided by the genius of one man alone; the government had stood firm, and had vanquished its foes, through the mighty ability of its chief statesman; one who, more fortunate than Pitt in the brilliant success of his measures, at home and abroad, was often called, like Pitt, the Great Commoner.

Yet it was a title, perhaps, that scarcely suited him, for he was patrician to the core; patrician in pride, in name, in blood, and in caste, though he disdained all coronets. You could not have lowered him; also, you could not have ennobled him. He was, simply and intrinsically, a great man. At the same time, he was the haughtiest of aristocrats; too haughty, by all the Bourbon and Plantagenet blood of his line, ever

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to stoop to the patent of a present earldom, or a marquisate of the new creation.

The crowds pressed closest and densest as one by one his colleagues appeared, passing to their carriages; and his name ran breathlessly down the people's ranks; they trusted him, they honoured him, they were proud of him, as this country, so naturally and strongly conservative in its instincts, however radical it be in its reasonings, is proud of its aristocratic leaders. They were ready to cheer him to the echo the moment he appeared; specially ready to-night, for he had achieved a signal victory, and the populace always cense success. At last he came; a tall and handsome man, very fair, and of splendid bearing, about fifty years of age, and with a physiognomy that showed both the habit and the power of command. He was satiated to weariness with public homage; but he acknowledged the greetings of the people as they rang on the night air with a kindly, if negligent, courtesy—the courtesy of a *grand seigneur*. At his side was a boy, his only son, a mere child of some seven years; indulged in his every inclination, he had been taken to the House that evening by a good-natured peer, to a seat under the clock, and had for the first time heard his father speak—heard, with his eyes glittering, and his cheeks flushed, and his heart beating, in a passionate triumph and an enthusiastic love, much beyond his years—with a silent

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vow, moreover, in his childish thoughts, to go and do likewise in his manhood.

"That boy will be a great man, if—if he don't have too much genius," the old peer who sat beside him had said to himself, watching his kindling eyes and his breathless lips, and knowing, like a world-wise old man of business as he was, that the fate of Prometheus is the same in all ages, and that it is mediocrity which pays.

The boy had a singular beauty; it had been a characteristic of the great minister's race through all centuries; woman's tenderness and fashionable fancies were shown in the elegance of his dress, with its velvets and laces and delicate hues; and the gold of his hair, falling over his shoulders in long, clustering curls, glittered in the lamp-light as, at his father's recognition of the crowd, he lifted his cap with its eagle's feather and bowed to them too — a child's bright, gratified amusement blent with the proud, courtly grace of his father's manner, already hereditary in him.

The hearts of the people warmed to him for his beauty and for his childhood, the hearts of the women especially, and they gave him another and yet heartier cheer. He bowed, like a young prince, to the right and to the left, and looked up in the grave statesman's face with a happy, joyous laugh; yet still in his eyes, as they glanced over the throngs, there was the look

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—dreamy, brilliant, half wistful, half eager—which was beyond his age, and which had made the old peer fear for him that gift of the gods which the world does not love, because—most unwisely, most suicidally —it fears it.

Amongst the crowd, wedged in with the thousands pressing there about the carriages waiting for the members, stood a woman; she was in mourning clothes, that hung sombrely and heavily about her, and a dark veil obscured her features. By something in her attitude, something in her form, it would have been guessed that she had been handsome, not very long since, either, but that now there was more in her that was harsh, and perhaps coarse, than there was of any other trait. Her features could not be seen; her eyes alone shone through the folds of her veil, and were fixed on the famous politician as he came out from the entrance of the Commons, and on the young boy by his side. Her own hand was on the shoulder of a child but a few years older, very strongly built, short, and muscularly made, with features of a thoroughly English type — that which is vulgarly called the Saxon; his skin was very tanned, his linen torn and untidy, his hands brown as berries and broad as a young lion's paws, and his eyes, blue, keen, with an infinite mass of humour in them, looked steadily out from under the straw hat drawn over them—they, too, were fastened on the bright hair and the delicate dress of the little aristocrat with some such look as,

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when a child, Manon Philippon gave the gay and glittering groups of Versailles and the young Queen whom she lived to drag to the scaffold.

The woman's hand weighed more heavily on his shoulder, and she stooped her head till her lips touched his cheek, with a hoarse whisper:

"There is your enemy!"

The boy nodded silently, and a look passed over his face, over the sturdy defiance of his mouth, and the honest mischief of his eyes, very bitter, very merciless, worse in one so young than the fiercest outburst of evanescent rage.

Life was but just opening in him; but already he had learned man's first instinct—to hate.

Where they stood, on the edge of the pressing throng, that had left but a narrow lane for the passage of the ministers, the little patrician was close to the boy who stared at him with so dogged a jealousy and detestation in his glance; and his own large eyes, with a wondering surprise in their brilliance, rested a moment on the only face that in a world, to him, of luxury and love had ever looked darkly on him. He paused, the naturally generous and tender temper in him leading him, unconsciously, rather to pity and to reconciliation than to offence; he had never seen this stranger before, but his instinct was to woo him out of his angry solitude. He touched him, with a bright and loving smile, giving what he had to give.

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"You look vexed and tired—take these!"

He put into his hand a packet of French bonbons that had been given him in the Ladies' Gallery, and followed his father, with a glad, rapid bound, into the carriage, by whose steps they were; the servants shut the door with a clash; the wheels rolled away with a loud clatter, swelling the thunder of the busy midnight streets. The boy in the throng stood silent, looking at the dainty, costly, enamelled Paris packet of crystallised sweetmeats and fruits; then, without a word, he flung it savagely on the ground, and stamped it out under his heel, making the painted, silvered paper and the luscious bonbons a battered, trampled mass, down in the mud of the pavement.

There was a world of eloquence in the gesture. Rich bonbons rarely touched his lips, and he was child enough to love them well; but he threw them out on the trottoir now, as though they had been so much sand.

As his carriage rolled through the streets in the late night, the great statesman passed his hand lightly over the fair locks of his son; the child had much of his own nature, of his own intellect, and he saw in his young heir the future security for the continuance of the brilliance and power of his race.

"You will make the nation honour you for yourself one day, Ernest?" he said, gently, as his hand lay on the soft, glittering hair.

There were tears in the child's eyes, and a brave

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and noble promise and comprehension in his face, as he looked up at his father.

"If I live, I will!"

As they were propelled onward by the pressure of the moving crowd, the woman and her son went slowly along the heated streets, with the gas-glare of some fish or meat shop thrown on them as they passed in yellow flaring illumination. They were not poor, though on foot thus; and though the lad's dress was torn and soiled through his own inveterate activity and endless mischief, no pressure of any want was on them; yet his glance followed the carriages, darted under the awnings before the mansions, and penetrated wherever riches or rank struck him, with the hungry, impatient, longing look of a starving Rousseau or Gilbert, hounded to socialism for lack of a sou—a look very strange and premature on a face so young, and naturally so mirthful and good humoured.

His mother watched him, and leant her hand again on his shoulder.

"You will have your revenge, one day?"

"*Won't I!*"

The schoolboy answer was ground out with a meaning intensity, as he set his teeth like a young bulldog.

Each had promised to gain a very different *aristeia;* when they came to the combat, with whom would rest the victory?

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BOOK THE FIRST.

Io tocaré cantando
El músico instrumento sonoroso,
Tu el glores gazando
Danza, y festéja á Dios que es poderos
O gazemos de esta gloria
Por que la humana es transitoria!

Ode of the Flower. IXTILXOCHITL.

Plutus, the god of gold,
Is but his steward . . . . . .
. . . . . no gift to him
But breeds the giver a return exceeding
All use of quittance.

SHAKSPEARE.

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CHAPTER I.

PYTHIAS OR MEPHISTOPHELES?

It was the height of the London season. Town filled. Death had made gaps in the crowd; but new comers filled up the rents, and the lost were unmissed. Brows that, the last year, had been stainless as snow, had been smirched with slander, or stained with shame; but the opals crowning them belied their ancient fame, and did not pale. Light hearts had grown heavy, proud heads had been bent, fair cheeks had learned to cover care with pearl-powder, words had been spoken that a lifetime could not recal, links had been broken that an eternity would not unite, seeds of sin and sorrow had been sown never again to be uprooted, in the brief months that lay between "last season" and this phœnix of the new; but the fashionable world met again with smiling lips, and bland complaisance, and unutterable ennui, and charming

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mutual compliment, to go through all the old routine with well-trained faces, befitting the arena.

It was April. The last carriages had rolled out by the Corner, the last hacks paced out of the Ride, the last sunlight was fading; epicures were reflecting on their club-dinners, beauties were studying the contents of their jewel-boxes, the one enjoying a matelote, the other a conquest, in dreamy anticipation; chandeliers were being lit for political receptions, where it would be a three hours' campaign to crush up the stairs; and members, waiting to go in on Supply, were improving their minds by discussing a new dancer's ankles, and the extraordinary scratching of Lord of the Isles for the Guineas. The West, in a word, was beginning its Business, which is Pleasure; while the East laid aside its Pleasure, which is Business; and it was near eight o'clock on a spring night in London.

Half a hundred entertainments waited for his selection; all the loveliest women, of mondes proper and improper, were calculating their chances of securing his preference; every sort of intellectual or material pleasure waited for him as utterly as they ever waited for Sulla when the rose-wreaths were on his hair, and Quintus Roscius ready with his ripest wit; and for him, as truly as for Sulla, "*Felix*" might have described him as the darling of the gods; yet, alone in his house in Park-lane, a man lay in idleness and ease, indolently smoking a narghilé from a great silver basin of rose-water. A stray sunbeam

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lingered here and there on some delicate bit of statuary, or jewelled tazza, or Cellini cup, in a chamber luxurious enough for an imperial bride's, with its hangings of violet velvet, its ceiling painted after Greuze, its walls hung with rich Old Masters and Petits Maîtres, and its niches screening some group of Coysvox, Coustou, or Canova. It was, however, only the "study," the pet retreat of its owner, a collector and a connoisseur, who lay now on his sofa, near a table strewn with Elzevirs, Paris novels, MSS., croquis, before-letter proofs, and dainty female notes. The fading sunlight fell across his face as his head rested on his left arm. A painter would have drawn him as Alcibiades, or, more poetically still, would have idealised him into the Phœbus Lykêgenês, the Light-born, the Sun-god, of Hellas, so singularly great was his personal beauty. A physiognomist would have said, "Here is a voluptuary, here is a profound thinker, here is a poet, here is one who may be a leader and chief among men, if he will;" but would have added, "Here is one who may, fifty to one, sink too softly into his bed of rose-leaves ever to care to rise in full strength out of it." Artists were chiefly attracted by the power, men by the brilliance, and women by the gentleness of this dazzling beauty; for the latter, indeed, a subtler spell yet lay in the deep blue, poetic, eloquent eyes, which ever gave such tender homage, such dangerous prayer, to their own loveliness. The brow was magnificent, meditative

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enough for Plato's; the rich and gold-hued hair bright as any Helen's; the gaze of the eyes in rest thoughtful as might be that of a Marcus Aurelius; the mouth, insouciant and epicurean as the lips of a Catullus. The contradictions in the features were the anomalies in the character. For the rest, his stature was much above the ordinary height; his attitude showed both the strength and grace of his limbs; his age was a year or so over thirty; and his reverie now was of the lightest and laziest—he had not a single care on him.

There was a double door to his room; he was never disturbed there, either by servants or friends, on any sort of pretext; his house was as free to all as a caravanserai, but to this chamber only all the world was interdicted. Yet the first handle turned, the second turned, the portière was tossed aside with a jerk, and the audacious new comer entered. A gallant retriever lying by the couch showed fight and growled. Yet the guest was one he saw every day, almost every hour—the *ami de la maison*, the master comptroller of the household.

"My dear Ernest! you alone at this time of the day? What a miracle! I have actually dared to invade your sanctum, your holy of holies; deuced pleasant place, too. What is it you do here? Paint your prettiest picture, chip your prettiest statuette, make love to your prettiest mistress, write your novels, study occult sciences, meditate on the Dialec-

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tics, seek the Philosopher's stone, search for the Venetian colour-secret, have suppers à la Régence to which you deny even your bosom friends, or what is it? On my honour, I am very curious!"

"Tell me some news, Trevenna," said his host, with an amused smile, in a voice low, clear, lingering, and melodious as music, contrasting forcibly with the sharp, ringing, metallic tones of his visitor. "How came you to come in here? You know——"

"I know; but I had curiosity and a good opportunity: what mortal, or what morals, ever resisted such a combination? I am weaker than a woman. No principle, not a shred. Am I responsible for that? No—organisation and education. How dark you are here! May I ring for lights?"

"Do you want light to talk by?" laughed his friend, stretching his hand to a bell-handle. "Your tongue generally runs on oiled wheels, Trevenna."

"Of course it does. It's my trade to talk; I rattle my tongue as a nigger singer rattles his bones; I must chat as an organ-grinder grinds. I'm asked out to dine to talk. If I grew a bore, every creature would drop me; and if I grew too dull to get up a scandal, I should be very sure never to get a dinner. My tongue's my merchandise!"

With which statement of his social status, John Trevenna jerked himself out of his chair, and, while the groom of the chamber lighted the chandelier, strolled round the apartment. He was a man of six

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or eight-and-thirty, short, a little stout, but wonderfully supple, quick, and agile, a master of all the science of the gymnasium; his face was plain and irregular in feature, but bright, frank, full of good humour almost to joviality, and of keen, alert, cultured intelligence, prepossessing through its blunt and honest candour, its merry smile showing the strong white teeth, its bonhomie, and its look of acute indomitable *cleverness*—a cleverness which is no more genius than an English farce is wit, but which, sharper than intellect alone, more audacious than talent alone, will trick the world, and throw its foes, and thrive in all it does, while genius gets stoned or starves. He loitered round the room, with his eyeglass up, glancing here, there, and everywhere, as though he were an embryo auctioneer, and stopped at last before a Daphne flying from Apollo, and just caught by him, shrouded in rose-coloured curtains.

"Nice little girl this? Rather enticing; made her look alive with that rose-light; tantalising to know it's nothing but marble; sweetly pretty, certainly!"

"Sweetly pretty? Good Heavens, my dear fellow, hold your tongue! One would think you a cockney adoring the moon, or a lady's-maid a new fashion. That Daphne's the most perfect thing Coustou ever did."

"Don't know anything about them! Never see a bit of difference in them from the plaster casts you buy for a shilling. Won't break quite so soon, to be

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sure. She *is* pretty—nice and round, and all that; but I don't care a straw about art—never could."

"And you are proud of your paganism? Well, you are not the first person who has boasted of his heresy for the sheer sake of appearing singular."

"To be sure! I understand Wilkes; let me be the ugliest man in Europe, rather than remain in mediocrity among the medium plain faces. There's not a hair's difference between notoriety and fame. Be celebrated for something, and if you can't jump into a pit like Curtius, pop yourself into a volcano like Empedocles; the foolery's immortalised just as well as a heroism; the world talks of you, that's all you want. If I couldn't be Alexander, I'd be Diogenes; if I weren't a great hero, I'd be a most ingenious murderer. There's no radical difference between the two! But, I say, do you ever remember what a fearful amount you throw away on these dolly things?" pursued Trevenna, interrupting himself to strike his cane on the Daphne.

"The only things worth the money I spend! My dear Trevenna, I thank you much for your interest, but I can dispense with your counsels."

The answer was very gentle, but there was the slight languor of hauteur natural to a man accustomed to deference.

Trevenna laughed good temperedly; he had never been seen out of humour.

"Pardon! I'm a brusque fellow, and say what

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comes uppermost; wiser if I kept it, sometimes. If you do live *en prince*, who wouldn't that could? I don't believe in renunciation. He is a shrewd fellow who, forced on abstinence, vows he likes it, and says he does it for digestion; but I love the good things of life, and say so, though I can't afford them. I should sell my soul for turtle-soup! By the way, monseigneur, before we eat *your* soup, there's a little business——"

"Business? In the evening! Do you wish to give me dyspepsia before dinner?"

"No; but I want to digest mine by feeling I've done my duty. There's something we want you to sign; Legrew does, at the least——"

"On my honour, Trevenna!" cried his host, with a gay, careless laugh, "you are abominable. How often have I told you that I trust you implicitly,—you are fit for Chancellor of the Exchequer,—and that I never will be worried by any nonsense of the kind?"

"But, caro mio!" pleaded Trevenna, coaxingly, "we can't do without your signature; what's to be done? We can't give leases, and draw cheques, and get lands and mortgages, without your handwriting."

The last words caught the indolent listener's inattentive ear. He looked up surprised.

"Bonds!—mortgages! What can I possibly have to do with them?"

"Moneys are lent out on mortgage; I only used the word as example," explained his prime minister, a

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little rapidly. "We trouble you as little as we can; only want your name now. Remember, the Guineas let you in heavily this time; one can't transfer those large sums without your authorisation. Just let me read you over this paper, it's merely——"

"Spare me, spare me!" cried the lord of this dainty art-palace, to whom the ominous crackle of the parchment was worse than the singing of a rattlesnake. "Smindyrides felt tired if he saw a man at work in the fields; what would he have felt if he had seen a modern law document?"

"Just sign, and you won't see it any more," pleaded Trevenna, who knew the facile points of a character he had long made his special study, and knew that, to be saved further expostulation, his chief would comply.

He did so, raising himself with slow, graceful indolence from his cushions, and resigning the mouthpiece of his hookah reluctantly; the acquiescence was very weak, very pliant, yielding to softness. Yet a physiognomist would have said that, with the powerful arch of the brows and the Julian mould of the chin, weakness could not naturally belong to this man's disposition, if too consummate a fastidiousness and too absolute a love of pleasure were inherent in it. The compliance was most insouciant; the willingness to sign, in ignorance of what he signed, a trustful carelessness that was almost womanish. But life had fostered this side of his character, and had done nothing to counteract it.

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"Stay! you haven't heard what it is," put in Trevenna, while he rattled off with clear, quick precision that showed him a master of *précis*, and would have qualified him to explain a budget in St. Stephen's, a résumé of what he stated the contents of the document to be—a very harmless document, according to him, merely reverting to the management of the immense properties of which his friend was the possessor. His hearer idly listened two minutes, then let his thoughts drift away to the chiar'oscuro of a Ghirlandajo opposite, and to speculation whether Reynolds was quite correct in his estimate of the invariable amount of shadow employed by the old masters.

Trevenna's exposition, lucid, brief, and as little tiresome as legalities can be made, ended, he took the pen without more opposition or reflection, and dashed his name down in bold, clear letters—

"Ernest Chandos."

Trevenna watched him as he wrote, watched as though they were all seen for the first time, the delicate firmness of the writing—a firmness so singularly at variance with the pliability with which persuasion had vanquished him without a blow—the hand which traced them, white, long, elegant as a woman's, and the single rose-diamond which fastened the wristband of the arm that lay idly resting on the table. Rings there were none on either hand: Chandos, the leader of fashion, had banished them as relics of barbarism.

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He pushed the paper to Trevenna with the ink still wet on the signature. "There! and remember henceforward, my very good fellow, never to trouble me with all this nonsense again. I might as well manage my own affairs from first to last, if my men of business must come to me about every trifle. I would not trust the lawyers without looking after them (though if a lawyer means to cheat you he *will*, let you have as many eyes as Argus); but, with you to give them a check, they can't go wrong. By the way, Trevenna, were you not touched on the Heath yourself?"

"Well, Lord of the Isles let us all in, more or less," said Trevenna, crumpling up his papers; "but, you know, poor hedgers like me can't ever risk more than a tenner or so."

"Still, your inimitable book-making failed you at the Guineas? I was afraid so. Draw on me as you need; you have blank cheques of mine, fill one up as you like."

"No, no! Oh! hang it, monseigneur! you put one out of countenance."

"Impossible miracle, Trevenna!" laughed Chandos, looking on him with kindly eyes. "How can any little matter like that ever repay all the time and talent you are good enough to waste in my service? Besides, between old friends there is never a question of obligation. Nine o'clock? We must go to dinner. I promised Claire Rahel not to miss her supper.

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She is enchanting! She has the *sourire de la Régence*, and the wit of Sophie Arnauld."

"And the smiles cost you an India of diamonds, and the wit is paid a cashmere each mot! If Monde deigned to recognise Demi-Monde, how would the countess admire being outrivalled by the actress?"

"The countess is like Crispin, rivale de soi-même alone. All pretty women and all dull men are vain! The belles and the bores always worship at their own shrines," laughed Chandos, as his groom of the chambers announced the arrival in the drawing-rooms of other guests, from the Guards and the Legations, to one of those "little dinners" which were the most coveted and exclusive entertainments in London.

"We must go, I suppose. Prince Charles might wait, but the turbot must not," he said, with a yawn (he was accustomed to have the world wait on, and wait for him), as he held back the portière and signed to John Trevenna to pass out before him, down the lighted corridor, with its exotics, statues, and bronzes glancing under the radiance from the candelabra. He would have kept a serene highness attending his pleasure; but he gave the *pas* with as much courtesy as to a monarch to that very needed man about town, his dependent, hanger-on, and fidus Achates, John Trevenna.

"What a clever fellow he is! I must bring him into the House: his talents would tell well there; they

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are frittered away in club windows," he thought, as he went down the corridors to his reception-rooms. To ask whether this fidus Achates were a Pythias or a Mephistopheles would have been a doubt that could never have crossed either the chivalry or the friendship of Chandos.

He would have thought such a question, even in thought, a blot on good faith, a treachery to the bond of bread and salt. His trust in Trevenna was as great as his services to him had been. If the world, that now idolised, had turned and crucified him, he would have been secure that this man would never have denied him.

And, thinking how he could serve his friend further, Chandos went down to his dinner—to courses prepared by a cordon bleu; to wines of comet years and imperial growth; to wit that was planned to please him as utterly as ever jesters strove to amuse their king; and, later on, to women's beauty, and the charms of softest pleasure, and the glitter of every revelry that could beguile the senses and enchant away the hours of a man who, brilliant as a Guise, lavish as a Bolingbroke, splendid as a Buckingham, was sought in proportion to his fashion and his fame, the world turning after him like heliotropes after the sun.

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CHAPTER II.

"LA COMÈTE ET SA QUEUE."

"DID you see Chandos' trap in the Ring to-day? Four-in-hand greys, set of outriders, cream and silver liveries; prettiest thing ever seen in the Park," said Winters, of the 1st Guards.

"Chandos has given six thousand for Wild Geranium—best bit of blood out of Danebury; safe to win at the Ducal," said the Marquis of Bawood.

"Chandos has bought the Titians at the Duc de Valleré's sale; the nation ought to have bidden for them," said the Earl of Rougemont.

"Nation's much better off; he's given them to the country," said Stentor, a very great art-critic.

"You don't mean it?" said the Duke of Argentine. "That man would give his head away."

"And if the Cabinet bid for it, they might keep in office," said Georgie Lorn, who was a cynical dandy.

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"Flora has been faithful three months: Chandos *is* a sorcerer!" yawned Sir Phipps Lacy, talking of a beautiful sovereign of the equivocal world.

"Chandos has a bottomless purse, my dear Sir Phipps; there's the key to Flora's new constancy," said John Trevenna.

"You have read 'Lucrèce,' of course? There is no writer in Europe like Chandos; such wit, such pathos, such power! I had the early sheets before it was published," said the Duchess of Belamour, proud of her privilege.

"'Lucrèce' is the most marvellous thing since 'Pelham.'"

"The most poetic since Byron!"

"Oh, it is a poem in prose!"

"And yet such exquisite satire!"

"Alfred de Musset never probed human nature so deeply!"

"Shelley never attained more perfect art."

"Certainly not! you know it is in the sixth edition already?"

"Of course! every one is reading it."

So the talk ran round at a garden-party near Richmond, among the guests of a Bourbon Prince; and for once the proverb was wrong, and the absent was found by his friends in the right, with an universal vote of adoration. When the sun is at his noon, and they are basking in his light, the whole floral world turn after him in idolatry; if he ever sets,

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perhaps they hang their heads, and hug the night-damp, and nod together in condemnation of the spots that dimmed their fallen god's beauty; they have never spoken of them before, but they have all seen them; and then the judicious flowers will sigh a vote of censure.

He of whom the world chattered now was the darling of Fortune; his sins and stains, if he had any, were buried in oblivion, or only cited tenderly, almost admiringly, as a woman puts her diamonds on black velvet that their brilliance may be enhanced by the contrast. It must be granted, too, that all the sins he had were the soft sins; but, let him have done what he would, his world would have christened it "such interesting eccentricity!" For to women he was the most handsome man of his day, and to men he was the leader of fashion and the donor of the best dinners in Europe. Friendship is never sealed so firmly as with the green wax of a pure claret, and our Patroclus is sacred to us after sharing his salt and his bread—at least if it flavour clear soup, and be *pain à la mode*;—black broth and black bread might not have such sanctifying properties.

"How late you are!" cried the Countess de la Vivarol, making room for him beside her in a summer concert-room, as the idol of the hour appeared at last for half an hour in the Prince's grounds. Madame de la Vivarol was the most bewitching of Parisiennes and the loveliest of court beauties, with a form as ex-

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quisite as Pauline Bonaparte's, and hazel eyes of the divinest mischief and languor. A fairer thing than this fairest of fashionable empresses was never seen at Longchamps on a great race-day, or in the Salle des Maréchaux at a reception; yet, such is the ingratitude or inconstancy of nature, Chandos looked less at her than at a strange face some distance from him, although he had for the last two years been no more rivalled near the charming Countess than if she had worn a silver label or a silver collar round her neck to denote his proprietorship, like his retriever Beau Sire, or his pet deer down at Clarencieux. Madame noted the lèze-majesté; she was not a woman to forgive it, and still less a woman to complain of it.

"They are talking about 'Lucrèce,' Ernest. They worship it!" she said, dropping her lovely, mellow, laughing, starlike eyes on him. They had fallen on him with effect, twenty months before, in the soft moonlight on a certain balcony at Compiègne.

He laughed. He cared little what the world said of him; he had ruled it too long to be its slave.

"Indeed! And do they read it?"

"Yes. They *do* read *you*," laughed madame too, "though they would swear to you on hearsay just as warmly. All the world idolises the book."

"Ah! I would prefer half a dozen who could criticise it."

"*Tais-toi*. How ungrateful you are!"

"Because my head does not get turned? That

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was Sulla's worst crime to mankind. They say 'Lucrèce' is a masterpiece *because* it is in its fifth edition, and they expect me to be intoxicated with such discerning applause," said Chandos, with his melodious, amused laugh, clear and gay as a woman's. Fame had come to him so young, he had gained the world's incense with so little effort, that he held both in a certain nonchalant mockery.

"To be sure! when men go mad if they get one grain of applause, it is very discourteous in you to keep cool when you have a hundred. What a reflection it is upon them! Where are you looking, Ernest?"

"Where can I be looking?" he said, with a smile, as he turned his eyes full upon her. It would not have done to confess to the Countess that he was scarcely heeding her words, because a face rarer to him had caught his gaze in the fashionable crowd.

The Countess gave a little sceptical, meaning arch of her delicate eyebrows. "She is very beautiful, mon ami, but her beauty will not do for you."

"Why?"

There was a little eagerness in the tone, and an unconscious self-betrayal that she had penetrated his thoughts.

"Because the passage to it will be terrible," said Madame de la Vivarol, with a shiver of her perfumed laces. Her teeth were set in rage under the soft,

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laughing, rose-hued lips; but she could play her pretty, careless vaudeville without a sign of jealousy.

"Terrible! you pique my curiosity. I have no fondness, though, for tempests in my love-affairs.

> En amour si rien n'est amer,
> Qu'on est sot de ne pas aimer!
> Si tout est au dégré suprême,
> Quand est sot alors que l'on aime!

Terrible, too? In what way?"

"*Par la porte du mariage*," said La Vivarol, with a silvery laugh.

Chandos laughed too, as he leant over her chair.

"Terrible indeed, then. It were too much to pay for a Helen! You have disenchanted me at once, so tell me now who she is."

"Not I! I am not a master of the ceremonies." There was a certain dark, angry flash under the curl of her silky lashes that he knew very well.

"I am a little out of your favour to-day, Héloïse?" said Chandos, amusedly. The passing storm of a mistress's jealousy was the darkest passage his cloudless and insouciant life had encountered. "I know my crime; I was not at your reception last night."

"Weren't you?" asked La Vivarol, with the most perfect air of indifferent surprise. "I could not tell who was, and who was not; how I detest your English crushes!"

"Nevertheless, that was my sin," laughed Chandos.

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"What excuse can I make? If I tell you I was writing a sonnet in your name, you would tell me we solace ourselves more materially and unfaithfully. If I said I feared my thousand rivals, you would not be likely to believe that any more. There is nothing for it but the truth."

"Well, tell it then."

"Ma belle, the truth will be that I was at Alvarina's début in *Rigoletto*, and supped afterwards with her and Rahel."

"Alvarina! that gaunt, brown Roman? and you call yourself fastidious, Ernest?" cried Madame la Comtesse.

"A gaunt, brown Roman—Alvarina! The handsomest singer that ever crossed the Alps! So much for feminine prejudice," thought Chandos; but he knew the sex too well to utter his thoughts aloud, or he would not have been forgiven so bewitchingly as he was, while he lingered to listen to a cantata, exchanged words with a hundred different people, who vied with each other to catch a syllable from the leader and darling of the hour, disentangled himself from Madame de la Vivarol, the Duchess of Argentine, and a score of titled beauties, who cared for no other at their side as they cared for him, and made his way at last to where his drag stood at the gates in the bright light of a May evening at seven o'clock.

"Pygmalion was nothing to you, Chandos," said Trevenna, swinging himself up the perch of the drag

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as a schoolboy up a tree, while the other men on it were owners of some of the highest coronets in Europe. There was this that was excellent and manly in this penniless man upon town; he never truckled to rank: peer or day-labourer alike heard his mind. "*He* put heart into a statue; *you've* put it into a woman of the world—much the more difficult feat. Madame la Comtesse is positively jealous. I do believe she divines we are going to have Demi-Monde to dinner!"

Chandos laughed as he started off his leaders—thorough-bred roans, wild, young, and fresh. Those fair, delicate hands of his could hold in the most riotous team.

"Not she! she would not do me so much honour. But every woman has a heart, even the worst woman; though, to be sure, we forget it sometimes, till—we've broken them."

"Broken them? Poetic author of 'Lucrèce'! Hearts never break—except as a good stroke of business, as sculptors knock a limb off a statue to make believe it's an antique. Every Musette we neglect vows her desertion is her death; but she soon sings *Resurgam* again, to the tune of the Cancan at the opera-ball."

"So much the happier for them, for we give them no De Profundis! There are exceptions to the Musette rule, though. I remember——"

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"Don't trouble yourself with remembrance, Ernest. She soon supplied your place, take my word for it."

"My good fellow, no—she died."

"Not out of love for you! She had aneurism or disease of the heart, or sat in a draught and caught cold, or ate too many cherries after dinner! There was a substantial basis for your picturesque hypothesis, I'll wager."

"Graceless dog! Have you never had a doubled-down page in your life?"

"I don't keep a diary; not even a mental one! Reminiscence is utterly unpractical and unphilosophical; agreeable, it dissatisfies you with the present; disagreeable, it dissatisfies you with the past. I say, they are taking five to three on your chesnut at the Corner. I don't see what can beat you at Ascot. There's a good deal whispered about Lotus Lily; she's kept dark."

"They always train closely at Whitworth, but rarely bring out anything good. Sir Galahad beats the whole Ascot field for pace, and blood, and power. You are quite safe, Chandos," said his Grace of Ardennes, a gay, vivacious young fellow, well known on the Turf, however.

"Queen of the Fairies is the only thing that could have a chance with Galahad," put in the Duc de Luilhières; "she has good breed in her by double strains—fine shoulders——"

"Leggy!" objected Trevenna, contemptuously,

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flatly contradicting a peer of France. "Not well ribbed-up; weedy altogether. Chieftain was her sire, and he never did anything notable except to break a blood-vessel on the Beacon Course. The touts know what they're about, and they're all for the Clarencieux horse."

"Galahad will win, if he be allowed," said Chandos. "I wish I could ride him myself; he would walk over the course. Ah! there is Flora on the balcony; they are before us."

"I wish they weren't here at all!" cried Trevenna. "You should never have women to dinner; they shouldn't come till the olives. You can't appreciate the delicate *nuances* of a flavour, if you are obliged to turn a compliment while you're eating it; and you never can tell whether a thing is done to a second, if, as you discuss it, you are pondering on the handsome flesh-tints of a living picture beside you. The presence of a woman disturbs that cool, critical acumen, that serene, divine beatitude, that should attend your dinner."

"Blasphemer!" cried Chandos. "As if one touch of some soft lips were not worth all Brillat-Savarin's science! What flavour would wine have, if women's eyes didn't laugh over it? You King of Epicures! you'd adore a Vitellius, I believe; and hang Pausanias for his Spartan broth the day after Mycale!"

"Certainly. A man who could capture Xerxes' cooks, and not dine off their art, deserved nothing

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less than the gallows. And Vitellius was a very sensible fellow; when he knew he must die, he took care to finish his wine first. Hero *versus* Gourmet! Why not? Carême benefited France much more lastingly than Turenne; and Ude's done the world far more good than Napoleon. I'd rather have been the man who first found out that you must stuff a turkey with truffles than have won Austerlitz, any day. Your hero gets misjudged, blackguarded, whitewashed, overrated, underrated, just as the fit's hot or cold to him; but the man who once invents a perfect sauce is secure for all eternity. His work speaks for itself; and its judges are his apostles, who never name him without benediction. Besides, fancy the satisfaction, to a cosmopolitan, amiable creature like myself, of knowing I'd prepared a delight for generations unborn!"

"Sublime apotheosis of gastronomy!" laughed Chandos, as he threw the ribbons to his groom before the doors of a summer villa at Richmond belonging to him, where most of these Bohemian dinners and suppers à la Régence were given—a charming place, half covered in flowering trees and pyramids of May blossom, with glimpses of wood and water from its windows, and with the daintiest and coziest banqueting-room in the world, hung with scarlet silk, drawn back here and there to show some beautiful female picture by Titian, Greuze, Regnault, or La Tour, large enough to hold twenty people, but small enough

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to feel *à huis clos* like a cabinet; with the air scented by dreamy incenses, and dishes and wines under the mellowed light that would have entranced even Lucullus, had he been throned there on his ivory chair. Of this villa, and this banqueting-room rumour ran high, accrediting it revelries as wild as Medmenham or as Bussy Rabutin's "Abbey" of Roissy. They who told most precisely what positively took place there, were, of course, always those who had never been through its doors! and the world loved to take their stories with spice, and whisper unimaginable naughtiness of this pleasant *bonbonnière* of a villa, buried away in its acacias and guelder-roses and flowering chesnuts, where laughter rang out on to the young summer dawns, and beauty en négligé outshone all the jewelled beauty of courts.

"The art of life is—to enjoy!" cried Chandos, that night, lifting up, to crown the sentiment, a deep glass of glowing red Roussillon.

"Toast worthy of Lucullus and Ovid! and you are a master of the science," said John Trevenna, who was, perhaps, the only one who saw quite clearly through that intoxicating atmosphere of pastilles, and perfumes, and wines, and crushed flowers, and bruised fruits, and glancing tresses, and languid eyes, and lips fit for the hymns of a Catullus.

"He is the darling of the gods!" cried Flora de l'Orme, that magnificent Arlesienne, with her melting, Greek-like glance, and her cheek like a peach in the

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sun; while she leant over him and twisted, Catullus-like, in the bright masses of his long, golden hair a wreath of crimson roses washed in purple Burgundy.

Chandos shook the wine from the rose-crown as he bent and kissed that glowing southern loveliness, and laughed under his diadem of flowers. The roses themselves were not brighter or more luxurious than the hours of life were to him.

He enjoyed! Oh, golden sum of this world's sweet content! Supreme truth of Faust; when he should

> to the passing moment say,
> Stay! thou art so fair!

then alone the philosopher knew that he could claim to have tasted happiness. When once we look back or look forward, then has the trail of the serpent been over our Eden. To enjoy, we must live in the instant we grasp.

It is so easy for the preacher, when he has entered the days of darkness, to tell us to find no flavour in the golden fruit, no music in the song of the charmer, no spell in eyes that look love, no delirium in the soft dreams of the lotus—so easy, when these things are dead and barren for himself, to say they are forbidden! But men must be far more, or far less, than mortal ere they can blind their eyes, and dull their senses, and forswear their natures, and obey the dreariness of the commandment; and there is little need to force the sackcloth and the serge upon us.

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The roses wither long before the wassail is over, and there is no magic that will make them bloom again, for there is none that renews us—youth. The Helots had their one short joyous festival in their long year of labour; life may leave us ours. It will be surely to us, long before its close, a harder tyrant and a more remorseless taskmaster than ever was the Lacedemonian to his bond-slaves—bidding us make bricks without straw, breaking the bowed back, and leaving us as our sole chance of freedom the hour when we shall turn our faces to the wall—and die.

Once, some twenty years or more before, down at the stately pile of Clarencieux, in the heart of the Devon woods, where red deer couched and the black eagle soared in the light of summer days above the haughty, ivy-mantled towers, Philip Chandos, the great minister, had paused a moment where his young son leaned out of one of the painted oriel casements of the library, hanging with a child's faith and love over the eternal story of Arthur. The boy's arms were folded on the vellum pages, his head was drooped slightly forward in dreamy thought, and on his face came the look that there is in the portrait of Milton in his early years.

His father touched him on the shoulder.

"Where are your thoughts, Ernest?"

The child started a little.

"I was thinking what I shall be when I am a man."

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"Indeed? And what will you be?"

"First, Chandos of Clarencieux!"

He could not have spoken with air more royal, if he had said "Augustus Imperator!"

"But besides?"

"Besides?" His voice fell lower, and grew swift and warmer, a little tremulous in its enthusiasm. "Why! I will be a poet and a statesman. I will have palaces like the Arabian Nights, and gather the people in them and make them happy. I will defend all the guiltless, and protect all the weak, like King Arthur. I will rule men but by love, not fear; and I will make my name great—so great that when I die they will only write 'Chandos' on my grave, and the name will tell the world its own tale!"

They were strange words; and, where he leaned against the oriel, the light from the setting autumn sun fell full upon his face, deepening there the lofty and spiritual exaltation of thoughts too far above his years. His father looked at him, and something that was almost a sigh passed the haughty lips of the great minister: the sigh was for the future of those heroic and pure ambitions—for the world which would break them as surely as the pressure of the iron roller crushes out the flowers of spring. And he could not utter to the child, in the proud gladness of his young faith, the warning that rose to his own lips, "Keep those dreams for other worlds, for they will never find fruition here."

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Yet, for the boy to whom these dreams came, untaught and instinctive, in all their superb impossibility, their divine unreality, his father could not but hope, himself, a future and an ambition still loftier than his own.

"The darling of the gods!" said Flora de l'Orme to-night, as she wound the crown of scarlet roses in her lover's hair; and she had said very truly. Fortune and the world never combined to flatter any man more than they combined to shower all gifts and graces on Ernest Chandos. When he had been but a child, in his laces and velvets, princes had tossed him bonbons, and royal women caressed his loveliness. Tutors, parasites, servants, indulged all his fancies, and never controlled or contradicted him. At Eton, nicknamed the Dauphin, he bore all before him, was noted for his champagne breakfasts, and had a Duke for his devoted fag. At seventeen he was his own master. His father died, grandly as Chatham, falling back, without a sigh or struggle, after one of the finest speeches of his life, in the full career of his magnificent and fearless leadership. The boy's grief was intense, both passionate and enduring; for he had worshipped his father and his father's fame. By his own wish, he went abroad: he would not hear of a college. His only guardian was his grandfather by the distaff-side, the Duke of Castlemaine, an old soldier and statesman of the Regency time; his mother had died years before. The

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Duke let him do precisely as he chose, which was to remain abroad four years, chiefly in the East, where life, whether waiting for the lion's or leopard's step through the sultry hush of an Oriental night, or learning soft love-lore from the dark eyes of a Georgian under the shadows of a palm-grove, enchanted and enchained one who, whatever after years might make him, was in his youth only a poet and a lover of all fair things—specially of the fairness of women. Life seemed to conspire to idolise him and to ruin him; after a boyhood of limitless indulgence, limitless tenderness, and limitless enjoyment, with his father's name the greatest in the state, he passed to the enervating, poetic, picturesque sensuousness of life in the Eastern nations, where every breath was a perfume, every day was a poem, and every lovely face was a captive's, to be bought at pleasure. He returned, to become the idol of a fashionable world. His beauty, his wit, his genius, that showed itself, half capriciously, half indolently, in glittering *jeux d'esprit*, his generosity, that scattered wealth to whoever asked, the brilliance of his splendid promise, the magnificence of his entertainments,—these became the themes of the most exclusive and most seductive of worlds; and while men cited him to the echo, with women he had only to love and he won. He was the comet of his horizon, and fashion streamed after him.

Some romances and some poems were traced to

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him, dazzling, vivid bagatelles, full of glowing, if sometimes extravagant, fancy, and of that easy grace which is only heaven-born in authors or in artists. They were raved of in Paris and London; he found himself twice famous, by literature and by fashion; and his invitation was far more courted than one to Windsor or the Tuileries: *those* only conferred rank; *his* gave a far higher and subtler distinction—fashion.

For the rest, his fortune was large; his estates of Clarencieux were as noble as any in England, and he had a house in Park-lane, an hôtel in the Champs Elysées, a toy villa at Richmond, and a summer-palace on the Bosphorus; and, costly as were both his pleasures and his art-tastes, even these did not cost him so much as a liberality that none ever applied to in vain—a liberality that was the only thing in his life he strove to conceal, and that aided men of talent to a fair field, or lifted them from the slough of narrowed fortunes by a hand that often was unseen by them, that always gave, when compelled to give openly, with a charm that banished all humiliation from the gift.

Thus was Chandos now.

How far had he borne out his childish promise of the night in Westminster? He could not have told himself. He was the most dazzling leader, the most refined voluptuary, the most splendid patron, the most courted man of his times; and, in the soft ease, the lavished wealth, the unclouded successes of his present, he asked and heeded no more. He was at

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the height of brilliant renown, and not even a double rose-leaf broke his rest.

"Who ever said that we cannot love two at once? It is the easiest thing in the world to love half a dozen: to love but *one* were to show a shocking lack of appreciation of Nature's fairest gifts. Constancy is the worst possible compliment a blockhead can pay to the beau sexe," thought Chandos, the next morning, as he breakfasted, glancing through a pile of scented delicate notes, cream, rose, *pale-tendre*, and snow-white, perfumed with various fragrance, but all breathing one tone. Women had done their uttermost to force him into vanity from his childhood, when queens had petted him. Women always coax their favourites into ruin, if they can. His temper chanced to be such that they had entirely failed. Of his personal beauty Chandos never thought more than he thought of the breath he drew.

It was twelve o'clock as he took his chocolate in his dressing-room, a chamber fit for a young princess, with its azure hangings, its Russian cabinets, and its innumerable flowers. Perfumes and female beauty were his two special weaknesses, as they were Mahomet's. He was a man of pleasure, be it remembered, with the heart of a poet and the eyes of a painter—a combination to make every temptation tenfold more tempting.

"Cool you look here?" cried a resonant, lively, clear voice, telling as a trumpet-call, as that privileged

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person, John Trevenna, pushed lightly past a valet and made his way into the chamber.

"My dear fellow! Delighted to see you. Come to breakfast?"

"Breakfast? Had it hours ago, and done no end of business since. We poor devils, you know, are obliged to walk about the streets in the noonday; it's only you *grands seigneurs* who can lie in the shade doing nothing. Peaches, grapes, chocolate, and claret for your breakfast! How French you are! The public wouldn't think you a safe member of society, if they knew you didn't take the orthodox British under-done chop and slice of bacon virtuously undistinguishable from shoe-leather. I wonder what you *would* do if you were a poor man, Ernest?"

Chandos laughed and gave a shudder. "Do! glide away in a dose of morphia. Poor! I can't *fancy* it even."

Trevenna smiled, as he tossed himself into the softest lounging-chair. *He* had known what poverty was—known it in its ugliest, its blackest, its barest, and had learned to hate it with a loathing unutterable, and thoroughly justified; for poverty is the grimmest foe the world holds, a serpent that stifles talent ere talent can rise, that blasts genius ere genius can be heard, that sows hot hate by a cold hearth, and that turns the germ of good into the giant of evil.

"Trevenna," went on Chandos, taking one of his

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hothouse peaches, "who was that new beauty at the Duc's yesterday? I never saw anything lovelier."

"There are twenty new beauties this season—in their own estimation, at least! Be a little more explicit, please."

"She was with the Chesterton. Really beautiful; beautiful as that Giorgone. There were plenty of men about her. I should have asked who she was, and have been presented to her, but I had no time to stay, even for her."

"With the Chesterton? Why, Ivors' daughter, of course."

"Ivors? Died last year, didn't he?—of losing the Guineas, they said, to the French colt. Why haven't I seen her before?"

"Because she has been in Rome. She's *the* thing of the year, is my Lady Valencia. They're raving of her in the F. O. this morning, and they have passed her into notice in the Guards; there'll be nothing to make running like her this season. You'll see her at the Drawing-Room to-morrow," said Trevenna. He was a walking court-newsman and fashionable directory, being able to tell you at a second's notice who was at the bottom of the St. Leger scandal about the powder in Etoile's drinking-water, what divorces were in train, what amatory passages great ladies confided to their Bramah-locked diaries, and whose loose paper was flying about most awkwardly among the Jews. "I noticed

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you looked at her yesterday," he pursued; "so did the Countess. She's fearfully jealous of you! Take care you don't get a note chemically perfumed à la Brinvilliers. I wonder what on earth she would do, if you were ever to marry!"

"Shrug her pretty shoulders, pity my wife, and console me, to be sure. But I shall never try her. Twenty years hence, perhaps, if I have nothing better to do, and ever see the woman of my ideal——"

> "That impossible she,
> Wherever she be,
> In meerschaum dreams of fantasie!"

paraphrased Trevenna. "What a queer idea, to be longing for ideal women when there are all the living ones at your service! That *is* preferring the shadow to the substance. What can you want, that Flora and all the rest have not?"

Chandos laughed, nestling in among the cushions of his sofa at full length. "My dear Trevenna, it would be talking in Arabic to you to tell you. Indeed, you'd understand the Sanscrit much quicker, you most material of men."

"Certainly, I am material! A material man dines well, and digests well. A visionary man enjoys his banquet of the soul, and has a deuced deal of neuralgia after it. Which were best, Lucullus' cherry-trees or Lucullus' conquests? The victories are no good to anybody now. Asia and Europe have been mapped out again twenty times; but cherry-brandy

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will last as long as the world lasts. Conquerors supplant each other like mushrooms; but cherry tarts are perennial and eternal, as long as generations are born to go to school. Material? Of course I am. Which enjoyed life best—your grand *summum bonum*—Dante or Falstaff? Milton or Sir John Suckling?"

"And which does posterity revere?"

"Posterity be shot! If I pick the bones of ortolans in comfort while I am alive, what does it matter to me how people pick my bones after I'm gone? A dish of truffles or terrapine to tickle my palate is a deal more to my taste than a wreath of immortelles hung on my grave. I detest posterity—every king hates his heir; but I dearly love a good dinner. If I could choose what should become of my bones, I'd have myself made into gelatine. Gelatine's such a rascally cheat, and assists at such capital banquets; it's the most appropriate final destiny for any human being that was ever devised. But what's the good of my talking to you? We look at life through different glasses."

"Rather!"

"A disdainful enough dissyllable. Well, we shall see which is best content of us two, after all—I, the animal man, or you, the artistic. You've tremendous odds in your favour: I shall deserve great honour if I make any head against you."

A shadow passed slightly over the face of Chandos: he had the variable and impressionable temperament

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of a poetic nature, a deep thoughtfulness, even to melancholy, mingled in contrast with the gayest and most nonchalant epicureanism.

"Content? at the end? How is it to be secured? Æmilianus led a noble and glorious life—to fall by an assassin's dagger. Ovid led the gayest and the brightest life—to go out to the frozen misery of Pannonia. Africanus was a hero—to be accused of stealing the public money. Petronius was an epicurean—to die by a lingering torture."

His voice was musing, and there was a touch of sadness in it. Trevenna laughed as he took a cigar from a case standing near, lighted it, and rose.

"Hang Petronius! It could have been no fun to torment him; the fellow died so game—wouldn't *wince* once! As for the end of the farce we play in,

> 'Tis not in mortals to *deserve* success;
> But you'll do more, Sempronius, you'll *command* it!

I like that misquotation. Only 'deserve' success, and I should like to know who'll give you your deserts! But I must go. There are no end of poor devils waiting outside; working authors and working jewellers; mute, inglorious Miltons, and glorious, talkative tailors; dealers with cracked antiques, and poets with cracked novelties; sculptors with their bronzes, and young Chattertons with their brass—— I beg pardon, I forgot! One mustn't laugh at genius, even in a shabby coat, here."

"No. Le Sage had no coat on, in his attic, when

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he refused the millionnaire's bribe. 'Tout compte fait, je suis plus riche que vous, et je refuse!' "

"And you think that sublime?—to tell the truth and starve? Faugh! I'd have taken their cheque, and written a ten times more stinging *Turcaret* afterwards! But, on my word, Chandos, your ante-rooms are as thronged as any Chesterfield's or Halifax's of a hundred years ago."

"Nonsense! There is no patronage now-a-days: a man makes himself."

"Pardon me, his bank balance makes him! If it's heavy enough, it will cover all sins—intellectual, moral, and grammatical—and float him high as heaven. So you are keeping that young Montrose at Oriel?"

"How could you find that out? He is a boy of great promise; the University will give him a fair start."

"At your expense! Spending your money in keeping penniless lads at college? Isn't there such a thing as quixotic generosity, Chandos?"

"Isn't there such a thing as officious interference, Trevenna?"

The rebuke was very gentle; Trevenna took it with the best of good humour.

"A delicate reproof, monseigneur! Well, what are your commands to-day? I know what to do about securing those *genre* pictures; and I'm now going to the Corner to see what the mid-day betting

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is for us; and I sent the cabochon emeralds to Mademoiselle Flora, and grudged her them heartily; and I have seen to the enlarging of the smoking-room of the *Anadyomene*. Anything else?"

"My dear fellow, no; I think not, I thank you. Unless——they tell me there are some good things in Della Robbia at the Vere collection; you might look at them, if you don't mind the trouble; buy, if they are really perfect. And bring me word round, if you can learn, what houses this daughter of Ivors will show at to-night. I never saw a lovelier face; but there is a quality above beauty that probably she has not. Rahel is not absolutely handsome; but that woman has such sorcery in her, that you could not be ten minutes with her without being in love."

With which tribute to the great actress's power, Chandos, a connoisseur in female charms, from those of a Greek grape-girl to those of a Tuileries princess, from the grace of a Bayadère to the glamour of a Rosière, resumed his pursuit of glancing through the innumerable little amorous notes that accompanied his breakfast, while Trevenna sauntered out, pausing a moment to put in his head at the door.

"I lamed my horse over that wretched heap of stones in Bolton-row; may I use one of your horses?"

"My dear fellow, what a question! My stables are yours, of course."

And John Trevenna went out on his morning's work. He called himself a business man; but what

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his business was, beyond being prime minister, master of the horse, and chancellor of the exchequer to Chandos, and knowing all the news before anybody else whispered it, was what was never altogether ascertained. Be his business what it might, in amusement Trevenna brought his own welcome to every one; and he entertained Society so well, that Society was always ready to entertain him.

Society, that smooth and sparkling sea, is excessively difficult to navigate; its surf looks no more than champagne foam, but a thousand quicksands and shoals lie beneath; there are breakers ahead for more than half the dainty pleasure-boats that skim their hour upon it; and the foundered lie by millions, forgotten, five fathoms deep below. The only safe ballast upon it is gold-dust; and, if stress of weather come on you, it will swallow you without remorse. Trevenna had none of this ballast; he had come out to sea in as ticklish a cockle-shell as might be; he might go down any moment; and he carried no commission, being a sort of nameless, unchartered rover—yet float he did, securely.

Twelve years before, one hot night at Baden, a penniless young Englishman had lost more than he had in his purse—had, indeed, in the world; the Bank arrested him; his prospect for life was to languish in German prisons, the prey of the debts which he could not liquidate, and none else would pay for him. For he was alone in life, and had, for all he

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knew, not a solitary friend upon the face of the earth. A boy of twenty, throwing his gold about to the enchantress of Play, heard the story, paid the debts, and freed the debtor. The boy was Chandos, the young master of Clarencieux. It was the last dilemma into which astute John Trevenna ever let life betray him; and it was his first step towards social success. His boy-benefactor was not content with letting his good services begin and end at the prison of the duchy; he made the prisoner his guest then and there, in the sumptuous magnificence of the life he was leading among emperors and princes, peeresses and Aspasias, in that pleasant whirl of extravagance called the Baden season. He was infinitely amused, too, with a companion sufficiently near his own age to enter into all his pleasures, and who was the first person he had ever met who told him the truth with frank good nature, and never annoyed him by flattery. From that day, through Chandos, John Trevenna was welcomed in the World; and the World soon kept him in it as a sort of Town Triboulet.

He was a privileged person. Every one knows how immense a carte blanche is given by those words. Chandos was the fashion; he pleased himself by doing all good services to Trevenna that circumstances would allow of; and the world petted Trevenna because Chandos befriended him. He lived so very near the rose, that much of the tender dews so lavishly poured down on the king-flower, fell, of ne-

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cessity, upon him. He was often rude, always brusque, *sans façon*, sometimes even a little coarse; but he was so frank, so imperturbably good humoured, told stories so admirably, and had such a thorough spice of true wit, that he was as good with wine as anchovies or olives, and men had him with their wines accordingly. Was a château dull on the shores of Monaco or Baiæ, or a country-house in the recesses; was there a dearth of news in a hot club-room at the fag end of a season; was the conversation dragging wearily over an aristocratic dinner-table; or was a duke half dead of ennui in the midst of a great gathering, the bright, laughing face of John Trevenna, with the white teeth glancing in a merry, honest smile, always fresh, never faded, never bored, but always looking, because always feeling, as if life were the pleasantest comedy that could be played, was the signal of instant relief and of instant amusement. The legions of blue-devils flew before his approach, and no ennui could withstand the tonic of his caustic humour and his incessant mirth.

Even his Grace of Castlemaine, haughtiest of Garter knights, most hard to please of all Regency wits—even that splendid old man, who had set his face against this stray member of society, could not altogether withstand him.

"Chandos' *homme d'affaires?* An interloper, sir, an adventurer, and I detest adventurers; tell you a first-rate story, make you a first-rate mot, but always

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have a second king in their sleeve for your écarté! Society's a soil you can't *weed* too vigorously. Still, a humorous fellow, I must confess; a clever fellow —very."

So John Trevenna had laughed his way into the world, and, laughing, held his own there. No one ever heard the story of the Baden debts from Chandos; but Trevenna openly confessed himself a poor man; he never teazed people with reminding them of it, but stated the fact once for all, without disguise. He made a little money on the turf, and doubled that little now and then by ingenious traffic here and there in the commercial gambling that the world sanctifies; but nobody knew this. He was simply a man upon town. He lived very inexpensively, dining out every night of his life.; he had no vices; he was an epicure, but that taste he only indulged at other people's tables; and he had no weakness for women; if you had offered him a beautiful mistress or a dozen of imperial Tokay, he would, without hesitation, have taken the Tokay.

As regarded his intellect, he had talent enough to be anything—from a jockey to an ambassador, from a head-cook to a premier.

"The Queen of Lilies will be at the Des Vaux to-night, Chandos," said he, that evening, in the green drawing-room at Park-lane, where, some dozen guests having dined with him, including S.A.R. the Duc de Neuilly and H.S.H. the Prince Carl of Steinberg,

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Chandos was now playing baccarat, half a hundred engagements being thrown over, as chanced inevitably with him every night in the season. Trevenna himself was not playing; he never touched cards at any game except whist, which he had studied as—what it is—a science. He stood on the hearth-rug looking on, taking now and then a glass of Moselle or Maraschino from a console near.

"What a charming name—the Queen of Lilies! Who is she?" asked his host, having already forgotten the commission he gave.

"The Queen of Lilies? Ah, she is exquisite! You have not seen her, of course, Ernest?" asked the French Prince. "The Laureate gave her the title."

"In a sonnet, made instantly public by being marked 'Private.' If you want a piece of news to fly over Europe like lightning, whisper it as a secret that would infallibly destroy you if it ever got wind," put in Trevenna, who, among princes and peers, never could keep his tongue still.

"But who is she? A new dancer, I hope. We have nothing good in the coulisses."

"A dancer? No! She is Ivors' daughter."

"Ah! I remember; I saw her yesterday. The Queen of Lilies, do you call her? The name is an idyl!"

"Ah!" said his Grace of Crowndiamonds, with a cross between an oath and a regret. "She is a great deal too handsome!"

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"Too handsome? How charming a blemish! They generally sin the other way, my dear Crown."

"Too handsome; for—she is ice!"

"Never find fault with women, old fellow! We may all of us think that each of those dainty treasures has a flaw somewhere; but we should never hint a doubt of them, any more than of their Dresden."

"Though the best Dresden is only soiled earth, just painted and glazed!" broke in Trevenna, taking out his watch. "You told me to learn where she went. At nine she dined with the French Ambassador; at twelve she was at Livingstone House; at one she was at Lady Bellingham's; and now, fifty-five minutes past one, she is at the Countess des Vaux's."

"Do you find out everything, Monsieur Trevenna?" laughed the French Duc.

Trevenna looked at him with a certain saucy triumph in his bold Saxon-blue eyes—blue as forget-me-nots, and keen as a knife.

"Yes, monseigneur—if I wish."

The answer was quiet, and, wonderful for him, without a jest; but the Prince turned and gave him a more earnest look than he had ever bestowed on this flâneur, this *rôdeur* of the English clubs.

"He will be a successful man, a great man, ten to one, when our brilliant Chandos, who has the genius of a Goethe, will have died of dissipation, or have killed himself for some mistress's infidelity," thought

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the Duke, a keen man of the world, while his eyes glanced from the sagacious, indomitable, fresh-coloured face of Trevenna to the delicate, proud, dazzling beauty of Chandos, with the light in his deep blue eyes, and the laughter on his insouciant lips.

"We should all of us have been at those places, if your baccarat had not beguiled us, Chandos," said the Comte de la Joie; "but social entertainments are a crying cruelty."

"And a great mistake. Society is ruined by the *rôture*, which has nothing to recommend its entertainments but the cooking, and has made the cooking the measure of the entertainments. St. Fond's verdict of English banquets remains true to the letter, 'Ils se saöulèrent grandement et se divertirent moult tristement!'"

"Oh, we all know what you are, Chandos," cried Trevenna. "You'd exchange your own cook—though he is priceless, were it only for his soups—to be able to eat a dried date with Plato, and would give up White's for the Scipionic circle or the Mermaid evenings!"

"Perhaps. Though I admit you are a more practical philosopher than any in Academus, and are as good a companion as Lucilius or Ben Jonson."

"I hope I am," said Trevenna, complacently. "I bet you, the philosophers flavoured their dates, as we do our olives, by discussing Lalage's ankles, and the Agora gossip. Scipio talked fine, we know; Lucilius

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laughed at him for it, and fine talkers are always bores; and as for the Mermaid—Raleigh whispered wicked things of the maids of honour, and Shakspeare wondered what old Combe would leave him in his will, and Ben joked him about the Crown Inn widow over mulled posset. The Immortals were as mortal as we are, every whit."

With which Trevenna washed down their mortality by a glass of golden water.

"Shall we all go to Lady des Vaux's, and criticise this Lily Queen, Chandos?" asked the Duc de Neuilly. "She will not be believed in till you have given her the *cordon* of your approbation."

Prince Carl was willing; the baccarat was deserted, and they went to the crowded rooms of the Countess des Vaux, one of those great leaders of the political world, who pass their existence in the supreme belief that cabinets would fall and the constitution perish if it were not for their boudoir conferences, which secure Providence to their party, and hold Europe together over a cup of souchong.

"There she is!" said Neuilly, on the staircase, that was still thronged.

Chandos looked through the long vista of light through the opened doors, and saw a loveliness as fair as the lilies after which they had named her.

She was beautiful as a young deer, this young English patrician, and had something of a stag's lofty grace. Her eyes were a dark, deep brown, large,

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thoughtful, proud, swept by lashes a shade darker still; her lips were sweet as half-opened roses; her hair, the same hue as her eyes, was drawn back in soft floating masses from a brow like a Greek antique; she was very tall, and her form was simply perfect. It was in its fullest loveliness, too; for she had been some years in Rome, and successive deaths in her family had kept her long in almost comparative seclusion.

"You said she was cold! Such beauty as that can never be passionless," said Chandos.

As though his voice had reached her through the long distance that severed them, she turned her head at that moment, and their eyes met.

Corals, pink and delicate, rivet continents together; ivy tendrils, that a child may break, hold Norman walls with bonds of iron; a little ring, a toy of gold, a jeweller's bagatelle, forges chains heavier than the galley-slave's: so a woman's look may fetter a lifetime.

"Passionless! with those eyes? Impossible!" said Chandos.

"Oh, she will have two passions," said Crown-diamonds, dryly, "two very strong passions—vanity and ambition!"

"For shame!" laughed Chandos. "Never be cynical upon women, Crown. It is breaking butterflies upon the wheel, and shooting humming-birds with field-pieces. Well, let the Lily Queen's sins

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be what they may, she is lovely enough to make us forgive them."

"Près des femmes que sommes-nous?
Des pantins qu'on ballotte!"

laughed the Duc de Neuilly. "Madame de la Vivarol sees you, Ernest, and already looks jealous."

"I hope not, mon Prince. I would almost as soon see a lady ugly as jealous. When she once begins to murmur 'for ever,' she has given the first chill to one's love," answered Chandos, with his low, melodious laugh, that had not a trace of care in it. "You know, I always thought, like Goethe, the proof of the tenderest heart is to love *often!*"

And he, in whose path loves were scattered as many as the hours, wooing him to that inconstancy which is, after all, the salt of life—"en amour ce n'est que les commencements qui soient charmants; je ne m'étonne pas qu'on trouve du plaisir à recommencer si souvent," as the Prince de Ligne has it—made his way at last into the rooms, with the French and English Dukes, to be detained right and left, and make his further way with difficulty into his hostess's presence.

There was empressement wherever Chandos moved; he was the idol of this ultra-fashionable and ultra-exclusive world. They followed all his social laws, and courted all his words.

When he was at all free, and sought to look for

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the Queen of Lilies, he found that she had left the rooms.

"I shall see her at the Drawing-Room," thought Chandos, whom too many were ever ready to console, for him ever to be left to regret an absent loveliness. Nevertheless, two or three times that night, in the midst of fashionable crowds, in the soft smiles of other beauties, or in the incensed, gas-lit air of Claire Rahel's late supper, in the hours that followed, there rose before him, unbidden, that proud, stag-like head, and those luminous, meditative eyes of the Lily Queen; they rose before the glitter of La Vivarol's; they rose beyond the lustre of Rahel's. Men of his temperament, the temperament of Goethe, are incessantly accused of inconstancy, because the list of their loves is long. On the contrary, they are most constant—to their own ideal, which they unceasingly pursue in every form which has its outward semblance. What their dreams long for is not there; in that beautiful shadow that looked so like it, but which was but a transparency, only bright through borrowed light—then they cease to love till again they pursue a shadow, and fools call them libertines.

That night, or rather in the dawn, Héloïse, Countess de la Vivarol, looked at her own face in the mirror, while her attendants were taking the sapphires and onyxes from her hair. It was well worth looking at,

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with its mignonne mouth, its glancing falcon radiance of regard, its indescribable witchery of coquetry, and its rich delicate tints, independent, as yet, even of pearl-powder. "*Belle comme un ange, et mesquine comme un diablotin,*" her mother had used to say of her in childhood; and the description still held good. Her mother was the Princesse Lucille Viardort, who had married an Englishman, a rich baronet. Her father none was ever so bold as to name: the baronet himself put in no claim for her; he lived apart from his wife, who was a handsome, sunny, good-tempered creature, as happy in the midst of the slander to which she gave rise as a sea anemone in a rock pool. It was her normal element: the Viardort, that restless and dominant race who had played at bowls with nothing less than all the rolling diadems of Europe, always had scandalised the world ever since they burst, meteor-like, upon it. All the Viardort love sovereignty, and get it, though none are born to it. Héloïse, who at sixteen married the enormous wealth of the Count Granier de la Vivarol, was not behind her race. She plunged eagerly, up to her lovely throat, in European intrigues—so eagerly, that she was now banished from France. Her lord did not follow her—there lives not the man who could prefer a wife to Paris—but allowed her richly; so richly, indeed, that she never called him anything worse than "*ce petit drôle*" when speaking of him in

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connexion with her money matters. With any other affairs he never came under discussion.

Before her banishment from Paris, Chandos, at the same time with herself, had been among the First Circle of autumn guests at Compiègne. In the torch-light *curées*, in the moonlit terraces, in the palace theatricals, in the forest hunts, she had fascinated him; he had attracted her. M. le Comte was a thoroughly well-bred man, who knew the destinies of husbands, abhorred a scene, and neither sought a duel nor a divorce; besides, he was not at the court. Their love-passages went silvery smooth, and were quite a page out of Boccaccio. Now, Madame was disposed to be jealous, and Chandos was a little disposed to be tired. Studies after Boccaccio often end thus — in bathos.

To-night she looked at her face in her mirror, and her tiny white teeth clenched like a little lion-dog's. Perhaps the love she had taught mercilessly so often had revenged itself here on its teacher; perhaps it was but pique that made her so tenacious to keep the sway she had held over the handsomest man of his age. Be the spring love, vanity, passion, or envy—what it would—her eyes glittered with a dangerous gleam under her curling lashes, and she muttered between her set teeth,

"If he ever love another, if it be twenty years hence——"

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The menace was not the less registered in her heart because left unfinished on her lips; even if the twenty years passed before she had to carry it out, the fair Countess was not a woman to forget it, or to falter in it.

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CHAPTER III.

A PRIME MINISTER AT HOME.

Over and over again John Trevenna had been pressed to take up residence in the stately suites of the Park-lane house; but this he had always refused. He dined there, lunched there, ordered what he chose there, and stayed for months each year at Clarencieux; but he had his own rooms in town, in a quiet street near the clubs. He liked to retain a distinct personality. Besides, people came to see him here who could never have shown themselves before the porter of the great leader of fashion; men with bulldog heads and close-cut hair, known as "sporting gents;" men with the glance of a ferret and the jewellery of Burlington Arcade, utterly and unmistakably "horsy;" men who always had "a lovely thing close by in the mews—go in your 'and, and only thirty

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sovs," to sell, but who traded in many things beside toy terriers; men very soberly dressed, hard-featured, hard-headed members of trades' unions; men with long floating beards, the look of Bürschen, and "artist" written on them for those who ran to read, without the paint-splashes on their coats; men with clean-shaven faces or white pointed beards, but, shaven or hirsute, Israelites to the bone: all these varieties, and many more, came to see Trevenna, who could never have gone into the hall of the fastidious and patrician Chandos. On the surface, Trevenna had but one set of friends, his aristocratic acquaintances of the clubs and the Clarendon dinners; *sub rosâ*, this bright Bohemian was thoroughly versed in every phase and, indeed, every sink of London life and of human nature. It was "his way" to know everybody—it might be of use some day; he went now—in the same spirit of restless activity and indomitable perseverance which had made him as a boy ask the meaning of every machine, and the tricks of every trade, that he passed—to the probing of every problem, and the cementing of every brick, in life. The multitudes whom he knew were countless; the histories he had fathomed were unrecordable. Men were the pawns, knights, bishops, and castles of Trevenna's chess; and he set himself to win the game with them, never neglecting the smallest, for a pawn sometimes gives checkmate.

Trevenna sat now at breakfast early in the morn-

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ing—half-past eight, indeed, though he had not been in bed until four. He slept the sound, sweet, peaceful sleep of a child, and very little of that profound repose sufficed for him. His rooms were scrupulously neat, but bare of everything approaching art or decoration. Chandos could not have lived a day in them, if he had been a poor man; condemned to them, he would have hung an engraving here, or a cast from the antique there, that would have gone some way to redeem them in their useful ugliness. Trevenna was utterly indifferent to that ugliness; as far as his eyes went, he would have been as happy in a garret as in a palace. His breakfast was only coffee and a chop; he exercised the strictest economy in his life. It was not, to be sure, very painful to him; for he had the run of all the wealthiest houses in England, and was welcomed to every table. Still, it was significant of the man that, well as he liked all gourmet's delicacies, he never by any chance squandered money on them, and, if he had had to go without them from year's end to year's end, never would have done. Naturally he was very self-indulgent, but he had schooled himself into considerable control.

The coffee was something rough, the chop was something tough—English cookery pure; but Trevenna, who would know to a T what was wanting in the flavour of a white sauce at the best club in Pall-Mall, and who could appreciate every finest shade in the most masterly art of the Park-lane *chef*, took both

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chop and coffee without a murmur. In the first place, he had the good appetite of a thoroughly healthy and vigorous constitution; in the second, he would compensate himself by the daintiest and most delicious of noon déjeûners at Chandos' house.

While he ate and drank, he was looking at some memoranda, and talking to a man before him—a man who stood before him as an inferior before his employer; a tall man, lean, venerable, saturnine, with iron-grey hair that floated on his shoulders like a patriarch, and down his chest in a waving beard; a man in his sixtieth year, with his shoulders a little bowed, and his hands lightly clasped in front of him. This was Ignatius Mathias, of the firm of Tindall and Co., which firm was well known citywards, in a little, dark, crooked, stifling lane, where their dusky, sullen-looking, rickety door was only too familiar to men in the Guards, men in Middle Temple, men in the Commons, and men in nothing at all but a fashionable reputation and a cloud of debts. Tindall and Co. dealt in damaged paper chiefly; they bought up most of the awkward things that floated in the market, and, it was said, were making a great deal of money. This was but guesswork, however; for the little grimy den of an office told no secrets, however many it guarded; and who was Tindall, and who were Co., was a thing never known, the only person ever seen, ever found there as responsible, was Ignatius Mathias, a Castilian Jew; and most people con-

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sidered that he was the firm; they never were surer on this point than when he shook his head gravely, and said he "could but act on his instructions—his principal had been very positive—his principal could not wait."

But, be this as it might, Ignatius Mathias was no common Jew lender; he never sought to palm off a miserable home-smoked Rembrandt, a cracked violin christened a Stradivarius, or a case of wretched Marsala called Madeira, on a customer. Tindall and Co. had none of these tricks; they simply did business, and if they did it in a very severe manner, if when they had sucked their orange dry they threw the peel away something cruelly into the mud, they still only did business thoroughly legitimately, thoroughly strictly. Their customers might curse them with terrible bitterness, as the head and root of their destruction, but they could never legally complain of them.

"Sit down, Mathias, sit down, and pour yourself out a cup of coffee," said Trevenna, who was always pleasant and cordial to everybody, and gained the suffrages of all the lower classes to a man. "I'll run my eyes through these papers; and when you have drunk your coffee, be able to account me the receipts of the month. I know what they should be; we'll see what they are."

"You will find them correct, sir," said Mathias, meekly; "and I need no coffee, I thank you."

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Neither did he take the proffered seat; he remained standing, his dark brooding eyes dwelling on the parchment-bound receipt-book open before him.

The papers supplied the sauce which was wanting to Trevenna's underdone mutton; as he glanced through them, his humorous lips laughed silently every now and then, and his light-blue, cloudless, dauntless eyes sparkled with a suppressed amusement. These papers, and their like, brought him as keen a pleasure and excitation as other men find in a fox-hunt or a deer-drive; it was the chase, and without, as Trevenna would have said, the fatigue of dashing over bullfinches or watching in sloppy weather for the quarry; it was a *battue* into which all the game was driven ready to hand—through and through under the fire of the guns. The beaters had all the trouble; the marksman all the sport.

"Chittenden — dined with him at the Star and Garter last Thursday: we'll soon stop those dinners, my boy. Bertie Brabazon—oh! he's going to be married to the Rosefleck heiress: better let *him* alone. Grey Græme—who would have thought of *his* being in Queer-street! Jemmy Haughton—little fellow—barrister—got a bishop for an uncle—bishop will bleed—won't see him screwed; Church hates scandals—specially when it's in lawn sleeves. Talbot—O'Moore—Wareley—Belminster: very good—very good," murmured Trevenna over details of paper

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floating about town, that those whom it otherwise concerned would have rather characterised, on the contrary, as very bad. He meditated a little while over the memoranda — amused meditation that washed down the flavourless coarseness of his breakfast; then he thrust his breakfast-cup away, pocketed the lists, and went steadily to business. Not that he looked grave, dull, or absorbed even in that; he was simply bright, intelligent, and alert, as he was in a ducal smoking-room; but Ignatius Mathias knew that those sagacious, sparkling glances would have discovered the minutest flaw in his finance, and that the man who listened so lightly, with a briar-wood pipe between his lips, and his elbows resting on the mantelpiece, would have been down on him like lightning at the slightest attempt to blind or to cheat one who was keener even than that keen Israelite.

"All right," said Trevenna, as, having come to the completion of his monthly accounts, the Portuguese closed his book and waited for instructions. Trevenna never wasted words over business, rapidly as he chattered over dinner-tables and in club-rooms; and Ignatius and he understood each other. "You take care to keep Tindall and Co. dark, eh?"

"Every care, sir."

"Encourage them to think *you* Tindall and Co. by the charming and impressive character of your denial, your inflexible austerity, your constant references to your principal? The more you refer to him, you

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know, the more they'll be sure that he don't exist. Everybody takes it for granted that a Jew lies."

There was a cheerful, easy serenity in the tone, as though uttering the pleasantest compliment possible, that made the words sound all the more cutting, all the more heartless; yet they were spoken with such happy indifference.

The Jew's dark and hollow cheek flushed slightly: he bent his head.

"I observe all your commands, sir."

"Of course you do," said Trevenna, carelessly. "The first you disobey will set the police after Young Hopeful. Tell him it's no use to hide; I know he's at that miserable little Black Forest village now. He may just as well come and walk about London. He can't escape *me*. When I want him, I shall put my hand on him if he buries himself under a Brazilian forest; *you* know that."

A change came over the unmovable, impassive form of the Castilian—a change that shook him suddenly from head to foot, as a reed trembles in the wind. What little blood there was in his dark, worn face forsook it; a look of hunted and terrible anguish came into his eyes. With the long-suffering patience of his race, no outburst of passion or of entreaty escaped him; but his lips were dry as bones as he murmured faintly, "Sir, sir, be merciful! I serve faithfully; I will give my body night and day to redeem the lad's sin."

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Trevenna laughed lightly as he blew a cloud of smoke from the little briar-wood pipe; but his glance rested meaningly on the Jew's, looking him through.

"That's the compact. Keep it, and I don't touch the boy," he said, curtly.

"You are very good, sir."

There was no hypocrisy here; acute, parsimonious, keen to cunning, sagacious to unscrupulousness as Ignatius Mathias might be in commercial transactions, here he was grateful and gentle, with a humility that made him the bond-slave of this drawing-room wit, this club lounger, this man about town, and a terrible supplicating fear mingled with the breathless thankfulness with which he looked at a benefactor whom most men would have been tempted to hold a task-master.

"You may go now, Mathias," said Trevenna, with a nod. "You know what to do in all cases; and don't forget to put the screw on to Fotheringay at once. The next time, come a little earlier—seven or so; if I'm in bed, I'll see you. It's rather dangerous when people are about; your visits might get blown on. All *my* people—the dainty gentlemen—are never up till noonday, it's true; but their servants might be about. At all events, 'safe bind, safe find.' They might wonder what I borrowed money of you for: it would hurt my character."

He laughed gaily and merrily over the words; they

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tickled his fancy. The Jew bowed reverentially to him, gathered up his papers, and left the room.

"The best organisations are sure to have a flaw," thought Trevenna, leaning there still with his elbows on the mantelpiece, smoking meditatively. "Now there is that Jew—marvellous clever fellow, shrewd, got head enough to be a finance-minister—grind a man as well as anybody can—take you in most neatly—a magnificent machine altogether for cheating, and hard as a flint; and yet that Jew's such a fool over his worthless young rascal of a son, that you can turn him round your finger through it. *There* he's as soft as an idiot, and as blind as a bat. Incomprehensible that a man can let such trash creep into him. It's very odd, men have so many weaknesses: I don't think I've got one."

He had one; but, like most men, he did not imagine it as weakness, and in truth it was not a very tender one, though it was very dominant.

"Not at home to all the dukes in the world, my dear, till twelve," said he, as the maid-servant of his lodgings (he kept no man-servant of any kind, except a miniature tiger to hang on behind his tilbury) cleared away the breakfast-service. That done, Trevenna sat down to a table strewn with blue books, books on political economy, books on population and taxation, books on government, books English, French, German, and American, all tending to the same direction

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of study. He certainly did not need to ponder over the statistics of nations to conduct his affairs with Ignatius Mathias, however intricate they were, and he had received every benefit that a first-rate education can confer. But he was one of those wise men who remember that the longest and most learned life, spent aright, never ceases to learn till its last breath is drawn; and, moreover, far away in limitless perspective in Trevenna's ambitions lay an arena where the victory is not to the strong, nor the race to the swift, but to the ablest tactician in such rare instances as it departs from the hereditary winners—an arena where adventurers are excluded as utterly as men of the foreign states, though they were princes, were excluded from the games of Elis. So for three hours and a half Trevenna, that idle, gossiping flâneur, that town-jester whom the town called Chandos' Chicot, plunged himself deep into political subtleties, and the science of statecraft, and the close logic of finance, bringing to their problems a head which grew only clearer the tougher the problem it clenched, the deeper the ground it explored. Hard study was as thorough a revelry to Trevenna as plunging into the cool living water is to a great swimmer. Like the swimmer, his heart beat joyously as he dived only to rise again the fresher and the bolder. Like the swimmer, his soul rose triumphant as he felt and he measured his strength.

Twelve struck.

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He, who was as punctual as if he were made by clockwork, got up, changed his dress in ten minutes, and rang for his tilbury to be brought round. It came, as elegant a thing as ever went round the Park at six on a June day, with a chesnut mare in it, pure bred, who would do twelve miles in five-and-forty minutes, if needed. Both the tilbury and the chesnut mare had been given him by Chandos, who knew that a man may live in what den he pleases, but that he must drive a good thing, or be dropped by the *mondes* to-morrow. "I will indemnify myself for my ascetic chop in Park-lane; but I will see how the wind is blowing for Sir Galahad at the Corner first," thought Trevenna; and thither he went.

The mid-day betting was eager, for it was within a month of the Ascot week. "The gentlemen" were barely out yet; but the book-makers were mustered in full force, from the small speculators, who usually did a little quiet business only in trotting-matches and quiet handicaps, to the great gamblers of the ring, who took noblemen's odds in thousands, and netted as much in lucky hits as those other great gamblers of the 'Change and the Bourse, whom a world that frowns on the Heath smiles on so benignly when they are successful. All the vast genus, flashy, slangy, sharp as needles, with a language of their own, a literature of their own, a world of their own, whom Marquises and Earls are eagerly familiar with in the levelling atmosphere of the Lawn and the Downs,

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and give a distant frigid nod to, at the uttermost, if they pass them in Piccadilly, were there; and amidst them, in the terrific Babel of raised voices, Trevenna pushed his way—as he pushed it everywhere.

Sir Galahad was higher than ever in public favour. All the shrewdest men were afraid to touch him. The Clarencieux stables had been famous since the Regency. Trevenna bet but very little, usually; he was known to have but little money to risk; but men were eager to have his opinion of the favourite. None had such opportunities of telling to a nicety the points, powers, stay, and pace of the Clarencieux crack in its prime. He gave the opinion frankly enough. Sir Galahad was the finest horse of the year, and, to his mind, would all but walk over the course. The opinion went for a great deal, especially from one who was a master of stable-science, but who was no betting-man himself. He had laid heavy bets in Chandos' name, backing the favourite for considerable sums so long as any could be found rash enough to take them.

There was one little, spare, red-wigged, foxy, quiet man who offered bets on a chesnut, Diadem, an outsider, unknown and unnoticed, generally looked on by the touts as fiddle-headed and weedy. The colt had trained in an obscure stable northward, and was a "colt" only to his breeders and owners in familiar parlance, having been known as a Plater in northern autumn-meetings, though having earned no sort of renown anywhere.

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When Trevenna left Tattersall's, this little leg, a worn-out, shattered creature, who had ruined himself over one St. Leger, and collapsed under it, was walking slowly out in the sun, having backed nothing except this ill-conditioned colt. Trevenna paused a second by him.

"Drop Diadem's name, or they'll be smelling a rat. Take the field against the favourite with any fools you like, as widely as you can."

The words were so rapidly uttered, that to passers Trevenna seemed to have merely stopped a second to strike a fusee, without noticing the little, broken-down leg.

"Wonderfully dark we have kept that chesnut. Not a soul has ever suspected the colt. He's so ugly! that's the treasure of him; and we've trained him so close, and roped him so cleverly, that the sharpest tout that ever lay in a ditch all night to catch a morning gallop don't guess what that precious awkward-looking brute can do," thought Trevenna, as he got into his tilbury.

And he went to eat a second breakfast with Chandos.

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CHAPTER IV.

THE QUEEN OF LILIES.

Lady Valencia St. Albans stood beside one of the palms in the conservatory of her sister Lady Chesterton's house. It was the day of the Drawing-Room; she waited for her sister, with her white train carelessly caught over one arm, and a shower of lace and silk falling to the ground, and trailing there in a perfumy billowy cloud. She was a picture perfect as the eye could ask or the heart conceive in the glowing colours of the blossoms round; and a painter would have given her to his canvas as the Ordella or the Evadne of Fletcher's dramas in all their sweet and delicate grace, or, if passion could pass over those luminous, thoughtful eyes, as Vittoria Corrombona in her royal and imperious beauty.

Passion had never troubled their stillness as yet.

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Some touch of calamity had indeed cast its shadow on her; the pressure of improvidence and of impoverishment had sent her father to the Roman air that she had breathed so long, and his decease had left her, for an Earl's daughter, almost penniless, while his title and estates had passed away to a distant heir male. Her poverty was bitter, terribly bitter, to the Queen of Lilies, daughter of the once-splendid house of Ivors. She was little better than dependent on the generosity of her brother-in-law, Lord Chesterton; and the nature in her was born for the magnificence of dominion, the consciousness of inalienable power.

She stood now under the curled, hanging leaves of the palms, their pale Eastern green contrasting, as though she had been posed there by a painter's skill, with the exquisite colouring of her own beauty, and the snowy, trailing robes that fell about her. Of that beauty she was too proud to be vain; she was simply conscious of it as an Empress is conscious of the extent of the sway of her sceptre.

"We are rather early," said her sister, a baroness, as she entered the conservatory; a handsome brunette some years her senior, and very unlike her; a brusque, abrupt, showy woman, ambitious and disappointed—keenly disappointed because a distant cousin had stepped between the Ivors Earldom and her own young son. "Who sent you those flowers? Clydesmore? Admirable person, very admirable!—great pity he's such a bore. How well you look, Va-

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lencia! *On ne pouvait mieux.* Chandos will be at the Palace, you know, this morning."

"Are you sure?"

There was a glance of interest from the Lily-Queen's deep, serene eyes.

"Perfectly. He is everywhere. It is the most difficult thing to secure his presence at any time. He is so fastidious, too! He has sent me a most courtly note, however. I wrote to say you had just arrived from Rome, and that I would bring you with me to his ball to-night; and there is his answer. It is an immense deal from *him!*"

Lady Valencia took the white, scented paper her sister tossed to her, and a faint, gratified flush passed over the pure fairness of her face; her lips parted with a slight smile. She had heard so much of the writer—of his fame, of his conquests, of his homage to beauty, of his omnipotence in fashion.

"He is very rich, is he not?" she said, while her gaze still rested on the superscription of his name.

"Rich!" said Lady Chesterton. "A thousand men are rich; money's made so fast in these days. Chandos is very much more than only rich. He could make us all eat acorns, and drink cyder, if he chose to set the fashion of it. He rules the ton entirely, and lives far more *en roi* than some royalties we know."

"Yes, I heard that in Rome. Men spoke of being

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'friends with Chandos,' as they might speak of being invited to the Court."

"Chandos gives much greater fashion than the Palace ever confers. Bores and parvenus go *there*, but they never visit *him*," responded Lady Chesterton, with an impressive accentuation almost thrilling. "Nothing will ever make him marry, you know. He would hold it in absolute horror. The Princess Marie of Albe is terribly in love with him—almost dying, they say: very beautiful creature she is, too, and would bring a magnificent dower."

The Lily-Queen smiled slightly, her thoughtful, half-haughty smile. She knew, as though they were uttered aloud, the motives of her sister's little détour into this little sketch of sentiment.

"With so much distinction, he could be raised to the Peerage any day, of course?" she inquired, half-absently, drawing to her the deep purple bells of an Oriental plant. She declined to pursue the more poetic track, yet she looked a poem herself.

"Raised!" echoed her sister. "My dear, he would call it anything but raised. The Chandos were Marquises of Clarencieux, you remember, until the title was attaindered in the 'Forty-five. Philip Chandos—the Premier—could have had it restored at any time of course, but he invariably declined. Ernest Chandos is like his father; he would not accept a Peerage."

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"Not a new one; but he might revive his own?"

"He might, of course. Nothing would be refused to him; they would be glad to have him in the Lords. But he has often replied that, like his father, he declines it. He has some peculiar notions, you know; there has been some oath or other taken in the family, I believe, about it—great nonsense, of course—utter quixotism. But men of genius *are* quixotic: it never does to contradict them. They are like that mare of mine, Million: give them their head, and they will be sweet-tempered enough—take you over some very queer places sometimes, to be sure, but still tolerably even-goers; but once give them a check, they rear and throw you directly. I never disagree with authors, any more than with maniacs."

With which expression of her compassionate consideration for genius, Lady Chesterton, who was very well known across the grass-countries and with the Buckhounds, shook out her violet velvets and black Spanish laces, well content with the warning she had adroitly conveyed to her sister never to disagree with the eminent leader of society, whom women idolised as they idolised Jermyn and Grammont in the splendid days of Hampton Court.

The Queen of Lilies did not answer; she stood silent, looking still at the note she held as though the paper could tell her of its writer, while her other hand ruthlessly drew the purple bells of the flower down in a shower at her feet.

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"Is he so much spoilt, then? Can he not bear contradiction?" she said, at length.

"My dear, he has never tried it," retorted her sister, with some petulance. "Bear it! of course he would bear it—he is the first gentleman in Europe; but the woman who teased him with it would never draw him to her again. He is so used to being followed, he would not know what it was to be opposed. He is the most graceful, the most brilliant, the most generous person in the world; at the same time he is the most difficult to please. Guess, yourself, whether a man whose ideal is Lucrèce is very likely to be easily enslaved. But it is time to go."

And having cast that arrow to hit her sister's vanity, or pique her pride, as it might happen, Lady Chesterton floated out of the drawing-rooms, followed by the Lily-Queen, who laid the note down with a lingering farewell glance at it as she swept away. She had heard much of its writer, some years past, in Rome, although they had never met; and she had seen his eyes give her an eloquent, mute homage the night before—eyes that it was said looked on no woman without awakening love.

"How beautiful his face is!" she thought, recalling the night just passed, and that momentary glance of one long famous to her by reputation. "Lord Clarencieux—Marquis of Clarencieux—it is a fine title."

"Going to the Drawing-Room?" said Trevenna, entering one of the morning-rooms in Park-lane to

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take his meditated second breakfast. Chandos was taking his first, the chamber scented and shaded, and cooled with rose-water, and his attendants Georgian and Circassian girls he had bought in the East and appointed to his household. The world had been a little scandalised at those lovely slaves; but Chandos had soon converted his friends to his own views regarding them. "Why have men to wait on you," he had argued, "when you can have women?—soft of foot, soft of voice, and charming to look at. To take your chocolate from James or Adolphe is no gratification at all; to take it from Leilah or Zelma is a great one." And his pretty Easterns were certainly irresistible living proofs of the force of his argument. They were fluttering about him, now with silver trays of coffee, sweetmeats, liqueurs, and fruit, dressed in their own Oriental costume, and serving him with most loving obedience. A French Duke and two or three Guardsmen were breakfasting with him, playing a lansquenet, at noon, from which they had just risen. Men were very fond of coming to take a cup of chocolate from those charming young Odalisques.

"Cards at noon, Chandos?" cried Trevenna, as he sauntered in the room, regardless alike of the presence of fashionable men, who looked coldly on him, and of the charms of the Turkish attendants. "Fie, fie! The only legitimate gaming before dinner is the sanctioned and sanctified swindling done upon 'Change."

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"Business is holier than pleasure, I suppose," laughed Chandos. "Business ruins a host of others; pleasure only ruins yourself: of course the world legitimates the first. How are you to-day? Yes, I am going to the Drawing-Room; I am going to see the Queen of Lilies. I will endure the crush and ennui of St. James's for her. Take something to eat, Trevenna?"

"All too light and too late for me. I'm a John Bull," said Trevenna, taking a glass of curaçoa, nevertheless, with some Strasbourg pâté. "Have you heard the last news of Lady Carallynne?"

"No; gone off with poor Bodon?"

"Precisely. Went off with him from Lillingstone House last night. Never missed till just now. Carallynne's started in pursuit, swearing to shoot poor Bo dead. Dare say he will, too: 'bon sang ne peut mentir;' it must break the criminal law rather than break its word."

"Hard upon Bo," murmured Cosmo Grenvil, of the Coldstreams. "She made such fast running on him; and a fellow can't always say no."

"Well, the mischief's her mother's fault; she made her marry a man she hated," said Chandos, drawing one of the bright braids of the Circassian near him through his hand. "Poor Car! he is quite *à l'antique:* that sort of revenge has gone out with hair-powder, highwaymen, patches, and cock-fighting."

"Beauty of a commercial age! we can turn da-

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maged honour and broken carriage-panels into money, now-a-days," said Trevenna. "Carallynne's *rococo*. Liberty all, say I. If my wife runs away with a penniless Hussar, why the deuce am I to make a fuss about it? I think *I* should be the gainer far and away."

"*Noblesse oblige*," said Grenvil, softly, with a glance up from under his lashes, that were silky and curly as La Vivarol's. "Car don't like his name stained; old-world prejudice—great bosh of course; and Mr. Trevenna can't understand the weakness—very naturally."

The softness of the thrust gave it the keener stab; for a moment the light leapt into Trevenna's bright eyes with a passionate glitter, but it was instantaneously suppressed. He recovered his gay good humour.

"Mr. Trevenna doesn't understand it, Lord Cosmo. Why standing up to have an ounce of lead shot into you across a handkerchief should be considered to atone to you for another man's having the amusement of making love to your property, is beyond my practical comprehension. If I were a bellicose fellow now, I should call *you* out for that pretty speech."

"I only go out with my equals," yawned the handsome Guardsman, indolently turning to resume his flirtation in Turkish with a Georgian.

"Where do you ever find them—for insolence?" said Trevenna, tranquilly.

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"Clearly hit, Cos," laughed Chandos, to arrest whatever sharper words might have ensued. "So Lady Car has gone off at last! I declare, Trevenna, you are the most industrious *chiffonnier* for collecting naughty stories that ever existed. You must come across some very dirty tatters sometimes. I do believe you know everything half an hour before it happens."

"Scandals are like dandelion-seeds," said Trevenna, with the brevity of an Ecclesiasticus—"a breath scatters them to the four winds of heaven; but they are arrow-headed, and stick where they fall, and bring forth and multiply fourfold."

"And scandals and dandelions are both only weeds that are relished by nothing but donkeys."

"You know nothing at all about either. You don't want scandal for your pastime, nor taraxacum for your liver; but when you are septuagenarian, dyspeptic, and bored, you'll be glad of the assistance of both."

"My dear fellow, what unimaginable horrors you suggest! Whenever I feel the days of darkness coming, I shall gently retire from existence in a warm bath, or breathe in chloroform from a bouquet of heliotrope. The world is a very pleasant club; but, if once it get dull, take your name off the books. Nothing easier; and your friends won't dine the worse."

"Rather the better, if your suicide is piquant.

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Something to censure flavours your curry better than all the cayenne. We never enjoy our entrè-mets so thoroughly as when we murmur over it, 'Very sad! terribly wrong!' Apropos of censure, even the *Hypercritic* won't censure *you:* there are three columns of superb laudation to 'Lucrèce.'"

"Never read critiques, my dear Trevenna.

> Such is our pride, our folly, or our *cru*,
> That only those who cannot write, *review!*

I am sorry to hear they praise me. I fear, after all, then, I must write very badly. Reviewers puff bad books, as ladies praise plain women."

"To show their own superiority; very likely. However, whether you please it or not, Jim Joselyn is so lavish of his milk and honey that the *Hypercritic* will have to atone for his weakness by chopping up novels in vinegar all the rest of the season. I am sure he will expect to dine with you at Richmond."

"Indeed! Then he may continue to—expect it. I neither buy a Boswell with a *bouillabaisse*, or play Mecænas by giving a *matelote*. Praise hired with a pâté! what a droll state of literature!"

"Not at all. Everything's bought and sold, from the dust of the cinder-heaps to the favour of Heaven, which last little trifle is bid for with all sorts of things, from a piece of plate for the Rector to a new church for St. Paul, it being considered that the Creator of

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the Universe is peculiarly gratified by small pepper-pots in silver, and big pepper-pots in stucco, as propitiatory and dedicatory offerings. Pooh! everybody's bribed. The only blunder ever made is in the bribe not being suited to the recipient."

"You have suffered from that?"

Trevenna, the imperturbable, laughed, as Grenvil dealt him that hit à la Talleyrand, murmuring the question in his silkiest, sleepiest tone. The Guardsman was a dead foe to the Adventurer.

"I wish I had, Lord Cosmo. I should like to be bribed right and left. It would show I was a 'man of position.' When the world slips douceurs into your pocket, things are going very well with you. I can't fancy a more conclusive proof of your success than a host of bribers trying to buy you. But, to be sure, the aristocratic prejudice is in favour of owing money, not of making it."

Which hit the ball back again to his adversary, Cos Grenvil being in debt for everything, from the thousands with which he had paid his Spring Meeting losses, to the fifty-guinea dressing-box he had bought for a pretty *rosière* the day before, as he brought her over from Paris.

"Let that fellow alone, Cos," laughed Chandos, to avert the stormy element which seemed to threaten the serenity of his breakfast-party. "Trevenna will beat us all with his tongue, if we tempt him to try

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conclusions. He should be a Chancellor of the Exchequer or a Cheap John; I am not quite clear which, as yet."

"Identically the same thing!" cried Trevenna. "The only difference is the scale they are on: one talks from the bench, and the other from the benches; one cheapens tins, and the other cheapens taxes; one has a salve for an incurable disease, and the other a salve for the national debt; one rounds his periods to puff off a watch that won't go, and the other to cover a deficit that won't close: but they radically drive the same trade, and both are successful, if the spavined mare trots out looking sound, and the people pay up. 'Look what I save you!' cry Cheap John and Chancellor; and, while they shout their economics, they pocket their shillings. Ah! if I were sure I could bamboozle a village, I should know I was qualified to make up a Budget."

"And my belief is, you could do either or both," laughed Chandos, as he rose with a farewell caress of his hand to the bright braids of gazelle-eyed Leilah. "Are you all going? To be sure!—the Drawing-Room, I had forgotten it: we shall be late as it is. Au revoir, then, till we meet in a crush. Nothing would take me to that hottest, dullest, drowsiest, frouziest, and least courtly of Courts, if it were not for our lovely—what is her name?—Queen of Lilies."

And Chandos, who glittered at the Tuileries and at Vienna as magnificently as Villiers ever had done

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before him, and who had a court of his own to which no courts could give splendour, went to dress for St. James's as his guests left the chamber, pausing a moment himself beside Trevenna.

"Are you coming?"

"I? No! *Mr. John Trevenna* is not an elegant name for a court-list. It would look very bourgeois and bare beside the patrician stateliness of Chandos of Clarencieux."

For a moment he spoke almost with a snarl, the genuine, bright serenity of his mirthful good temper failing for an instant. Surprised, Chandos laid his hand on his shoulder and looked at him.

"Nonsense! what is the matter with your name? It is a very good one, and I would bet much that you will one day make it a known one. Why should you not attend at the Palace to-day? I presented you years ago."

"Yes, you did, mon Prince," laughed Trevenna, whose ill humour could not last longer than twenty seconds. "You took me out of prison, and you introduced me to Court—what an antithesis! No; I don't want to come. I always feel so dreadfully like a butler in silk stockings and tights; and I don't care about creeping in at the tail of a list in the morning papers. It's not elevating to your vanity to bring up the rear, like the spiders in a child's procession of Noah's Ark animals."

Chandos laughed.

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"Well, as you like. Amuse yourself with my pretty Easterns then, though, on my word, Trevenna, you never seem to know whether a woman's handsome or not."

"No! I never cared much about women."

Chandos lifted his eyebrows in unutterable pity and amazement.

"What you lose! Good Heavens! that a man can live so dead to all the salt of this life. Adieu for an hour or two, then. I shall be very late."

"Poor fellow! He has brains enough to be Premier, and he is nothing but a penniless man on the town," he thought, as he entered his dressing-room and put himself in the hands of his body-servants to dress for the Court. "A better temper never breathed; but it sometimes galls him, I dare say, not to occupy a higher place. I have been too selfish about him: giving him money, and giving him dinners, is not enough to deal fairly by him; he ought to be put forward. I will try and get him into the House. I could have a pocket-borough for him from some of them; and he could be trusted to make his own way there. His style would suit St. Stephen's: he would always be pungent, and never be metaphorical; he is too good a scholar to offend their taste, and too shrewd a tactician to alarm them with genius."

And, revolving plans for the welfare and advancement of his fidus Achates, Chandos dressed and went down to his carriage, with its cream and silver li-

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veries, its four greys ridden by jockeys, and its fracas of fretting horses and of dashing outriders. Trevenna looked out of one of the windows, profanely regardless of the beauty of the Circassians that had been left in legacy to him, and watched the gay elegance of the equipage as it swept away.

"Go to the Palace, my brilliant courtier!" he said to himself, while his teeth set like the teeth of a bulldog—strong, fine, white teeth that clenched close. "Men as graceful and as glittering even as you went by the dozens to Versailles in their lace and their diamonds, to end their days behind the bars of La Force or on the red throne of the guillotine. My dainty gentlemen, my gallant aristocrats, my gilded butterflies! *Rira bien qui rira le dernier.* Do you think I amuse you all now, not to *use* you all by-and-by? We're not at the end of the comedy yet. I am your Triboulet, your Chicot, whose wit must never tire, and whose blood must never boil; but I may outwit you yet under the cap and bells. *'La vengeance est boiteuse; elle vient à pas lents, mais—elle vient!'* And what a comfort that is!"

He stood looking out still as the carriage swept out of sight, the dust scattered in a cloud behind it as the outriders dashed after it like a king's guard. This was the solitary weakness in his virile and energetic nature—a nature otherwise strong as bronze and unyielding as granite—this envy, intense to passion, morbid to womanishness, vivid to exaggeration of all

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these symbols, appanages, and privileges of rank. Chiefly, of course, he envied them for that of which they were the insignia and the producer; but, beyond this, he envied them themselves, envied every trifle of their distinction with as acute and as feminine a jealousy as ever rankled in a woman's heart for the baubles and the flatteries she cannot attain. It was a weakness, and one curiously and deeply graven into his temperament, in all other respects so bright, so shrewd, so practical, and so dauntless.

As he turned from the casement, the retriever, Beau Sire, standing near, fixed his brown eyes on him, and growled a fierce short growl of defiance. Trevenna looked at him and laughed.

"Curse you, dog! You needn't be jealous of me, Beau Sire; *I* don't love your master."

Nevertheless, Trevenna rang the bell and ordered some of the best clarets of Beau Sire's master to be brought for his own drinking, and took his luncheon in solitude off some of the masterpieces of that culinary chef, M. Dubosc. He offered Beau Sire the dog's favourite *bonne bouche;* but Beau Sire showed his teeth, and refused to touch it, with a superb canine scorn.

"You've more discrimination than your master, O you Lavater among retrievers! *You* know his foes; *he* don't," laughed Trevenna, while he finished his luncheon with the finer appreciation of Dubosc's talent, and of the oily perfections of the hock and

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the Maraschino, because of his previous asceticism over a mutton-chop.

"You are safe for the Cup, Ernest?" said his Grace of Castlemaine, as they encountered each other in the press of the reception-room at the Palace. The Duke was a very old man, but he was as superb a gentleman as any in Europe, a gallant soldier, a splendid noble still, with his lion-like mane of silken silver hair and his blue and flashing eyes, as he stood now in his Field-Marshal's uniform, with the Garter ribbon crossing his chest, and stars and orders innumerable on his heart, above the scars of breast-wounds gained at Vittoria and in many a cavalry-charge in Spain.

"Safe? Oh yes. There is nothing in any of the establishments to be looked at beside Galahad," answered Chandos, between whom and the Duke there was always a sincere and cordial affection. They were alike in many things.

"No; at least it must be kept very dark, if there be. By the way, there was a man—a thorough scamp, but a very good judge of a horse—offering very widely at Tattersall's to-day on a chesnut, Diadem. I know the fellow; he got into difficulties years ago, at the time of the White Duchess scandal,—she was carted out stiff as a stake on the St. Leger morning, and it was always suspected he poisoned her; but he would

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know what he was about, and he offered long odds on this chesnut."

"Diadem?" repeated Chandos, whose eyes were glancing over the many-coloured sea about him, of feathers, jewels, floating trains, military orders, and heaving epaulettes, to seek out the Queen of Lilies. —"Diadem? You mean an outsider, entered by a Yorkshire man? My dear Duke, he is the most wretched animal, I hear. Trevenna tells me he could not win in a Consolation Scramble."

"Humph! may be. You never scarcely go to the Corner yourself?"

"Very rarely. I like to keep up the honour of the Clarencieux establishment; but, of all abominations, the slang of the stable is the most tedious. Trevenna manages all that for me, you know."

"Yes, I know. Clever fellow, very clever; but I never liked him. Nothing but an adventurer."

Chandos laughed as he moved to pierce his way towards the young Duchess of Fitz-Eden, a beautiful brunette, with whom, rightly or wrongly, society had entangled his name in a very tender friendship.

"For shame, Duke! *You* should not use that word. It is the last resource of mediocrity when it can find nothing worse to cast against excellence."

"Believe in people, my dear Chandos, believe in them! You will find it so profitable!" murmured his Grace, as the press of the crowd swept them asunder, and Chandos, joining the young Duchess,

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while bows, smiles, and morning greetings recognised him on all sides from the courtly mob, passed on with her into the Presence-chamber.

From the Guardsmen, who, to their own discomfiture, had formed the escort, and were drawn up with their troop outside to catch but fugitive glimpses of fair faces as the carriages passed, to the Ministers in the Throne-room, whose thoughts were usually too prosaically bent on questions of supply, or votes of want of confidence, to turn much to these vanities, there was one predominant and heightened expectation—the sight of the Queen of Lilies. Rumour had long floated from Rome of her extraordinary loveliness. Poets had sung it, sculptors immortalised it, and artists adored it there. The golden southern sun had ripened it to its richest there; and it came now to adorn the Court. It drifted across the thoughts of Chandos, to the detriment of much of the beauty that was about him, and he waited for it impatiently where he stood among the circle of princes, peers, and statesmen about the throne. His loves had been countless, always successful, never embittered, intensely impassioned while they lasted, swiftly awakened, and often as rapidly inconstant. The very facility with which his vows were heard made them as easily broken; he loved passionately, but he loved so many. The eyes that he had last looked on were always the stars that guided him. A woman would very likely have told him that he had

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never really loved; he would have told her that he had loved a thousand times. And he would have been more right than she. Love is no more eternal than the roses, but, like the roses, it renews with every summer sun in as fair a fragrance as it bloomed before.

Women only rebel against this truth because *their* season of the roses—their youth—is so short.

One after one they passed before him, the beauties of the year; none attracted him very much. He had been so fully sated by all that was most dazzling and seductive in feminine loveliness for so many years, that, while still impressionable, he was, as they called him, fastidious. He looked almost eagerly for the presentation of the Queen of Lilies.

At last the delicate white robes swept by him; thrown out from the maze of gorgeous colour, of gleaming gold, of diamonds and sapphires, of purples fit for Titian, of rubies fit for Rubens, of azure, of scarlet, of amber, filling the chamber like a cameo from the deep hues of an illuminated background, the Athenian-like fairness of her face glanced once more on his sight; she was close to him as she swept towards the throne.

"She is fit, herself, for the throne of the Cæsars," he thought, as he followed the slow, soft movements of her imperial grace. Once again their eyes met; she saw him where he stood among the royal and titled groups about the dais, and a slight flush rose over her brow—a flush that, if it betrayed her, was

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hidden as she bowed her proud young head before her sovereign, yet not hidden so soon but that he caught it.

"Passionless! They must wrong her; they have not known how to stir her heart," he thought, as he followed her with his glance still as she passed onward and out of the Throne-room; and through the rest of the gorgeous and tedious ceremony Chandos let his thoughts dwell on those deep gazelle eyes and those soft silent lips, musing how easy and how beguiling a task it would be to teach the one the "looks that burn," and woo from the other their first and lingering caress. Her remembrance haunted him in the Palace; for the first time he thrust such a remembrance away. "Bagatelle!" he thought, as he threw himself back among his carriage-cushions and drove to Flora de l'Orme's. "Let me keep to beauty that I can win at no cost but a set of emeralds or a toy-villa; the payment for *hers* would be far too dear. Héloïse was right."

Chandos was a man for whom too varied amusements waited, and by whom too rich and intoxicating a life was hourly led, for one woman to be able in absence to retain her hold on him. The world, like a kaleidoscope, was always turning its most seductive pictures towards him. How was it possible that his gaze could linger long and faithfully on one?

"Brilliant affair! More like a *fête à la Régence* than anything else. How the money goes! The cost

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of one of these nights would buy *me* a seat in the House," thought Trevenna that evening, as he passed up the staircase of Park-lane.

The dinners and suppers of the Richmond villa, in all their gaiety and extravagance, were not more famous with Anonyma and her sisterhood than the entertainments to the aristocratic worlds, with which Chandos in Paris and Naples revived all the splendour of both Regencies, and outshone in his own houses the gatherings of imperial Courts, were celebrated in that crême de la crême which alone were summoned to them. The fêtes that he gave abroad he gave in England, startling society with their novelty and their magnificence. Chandos showed that the Art of Pleasure was not dead. To-night all that was highest in both the French and English aristocracies came to a costume-ball that was also at pleasure a masked ball, and professedly in imitation of the Veglione of Florentine carnivals. Trevenna paused a moment near the entrance of the reception-rooms, where he could see both the constantly increasing throng that ascended the stairs and the long perspective of the chambers beyond, that ended in the dark palm-groups, the masses of tropic flowers, and the columns and sheets of glancing water foaming in the light of the winter-garden in the distance. Masked himself, and dressed simply in a dark violet domino, he looked down through the pageant of colour fused into one rich glow by the

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lustre that streamed from a hundred chandeliers, from a thousand points of illumination, till his eyes found and rested on Chandos, who, with the famed Clarencieux diamonds glittering at every point of his costume, as Edward the Fourth, stood far off in an inner drawing-room receiving his guests as they arrived.

"Ah, my White Rose!" said Trevenna to himself. "How the women love you, and how the world loves you, and how lightly you wear your crown! Edward himself had not brighter gold in his hair, nor fairer loves to his fancy. Well, you have some Plantagenet blood, they say, in that *sangre azul* of your gentleman's veins; and the Plantagenets were always dazzling and—doomed."

With which historical reminiscence drifting through his thoughts, Trevenna drew himself a little back, farther into the shelter of an alcove filled with broad-leaved Mexican plants, and studied the scene at his leisure, his eyes recurring every now and then with persistent contemplation to the distant form of his friend and host, where the diamonds of Clarencieux, that had glittered at many a Stuart and Bourbon gathering, sparkled with every movement of Chandos as he bowed to a prince, greeted an ambassador, or smiled on a beauty. There were a certain savage envy and a certain luscious satisfaction mingled together in the contemplation.

"The fools that go to see Molière, and read novels and satires, while they can look on at Life!" thought

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Trevenna, who was never weary of watching that mingling of comedy and melodrama, though his genius was rather the loquacious than the meditative. "I can't picture greater fun than to have been a weather-wise philosopher who knew what Vesuvius was going to do, told nobody anything, but took a stroll through Pompeii on the last day, while his skiff waited for him in the bay. Fancy seeing the misers clutch their gold, while he knew they'd offer it all for bare life in an hour; the lovers swear to love for eternity, while he knew their lips would be cold before night; the bakers put their loaves in the oven, while he knew nobody would ever take them out; the epicures order their prandium, while he knew their mouths would be choke full of ashes; the throngs pour into the circus, laughing and eager, while he knew they poured into their grave; the city gay in the sunshine, while he knew that the lava-flood would swamp it all before sunset. *That* would have been a comedy worth seeing. Well! I can fancy it a little. My graceful Pompeian, who know nothing but the rose-wreaths of Aglaë and Astarte, how will you like the stones and the dust in your teeth?"

And Trevenna, pausing a moment to enjoy to its fullest the classical tableau he had called up in his mind's eye, and looking still at the friend whom he had alternately apostrophised as Plantagenet and Pompeian, left his alcove and his reverie to mingle

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with the titled crowd, in his dark domino and his close Venetian mask, casting an epigram here, a scandal there, a suspicion in this place, a slander in that, blowing away a reputation as lightly as thistle-down, and sowing a seed of disunion between two lives that loved, with dexterous whispers under his disguise that could never be traced, and as amused a malice in the employment as any Siamese monkey when he swings himself by his tail from bough to bough to provoke the crocodiles to exasperation. True, as monkey may get eaten for his fun, so Trevenna might get found out for his pastime; but, to both monkey and man, the minimum of danger with the maximum of mischief made a temptation that was irresistible. Trevenna had been the most mischievous boy that ever tormented tom-cats; he was now the most mischievous wit that ever tormented mankind.

He was a moral man; he had no vices; he had only one weakness—he hated humanity.

"How extravagant you are, Ernest," said the Duke of Castlemaine, who had made his appearance for twenty minutes with his daughter-in-law, the Marchioness of Deloraine, a beautiful Austrian blonde of two-and-twenty years, the hostess, to a certain extent, of Chandos' great parties. "Do you think these people love you any the better for all you throw away on them, eh?"

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"Love me? Well, the fairer section do, I hope," laughed Chandos, lingering a moment.

The Duke gave another little growl to himself as he brushed a moth off his broad blue ribbon. He, too, had had a *jeunesse orageuse*, and had made Europe ring with the brilliance of his extravagances; but Warburne Abbey now was heavily laden with mortgage in consequence, and its noble owner sometimes wished that he had played a little less *au roi dépouillé*.

"Ah! women were always the ruin of your race and of mine; you have the weakness from both sides, Ernest. There was your father——"

"Who was a deucedly proud man, wasn't he, Duke?" asked Trevenna, with scant ceremony, as he came up by Castlemaine's side, without his mask now, and having glided into a blue domino, that his gunpowder-whispers might not be traced to him.

The Duke looked down on him from the tower of his height, scarce bent more than when he was a Colonel of Cavalry at Salamanca.

"Proud? Perhaps so, sir. Adventurers thought him so. He put down impudence wherever he met with it. It is a pity he is not alive now."

"To put *me* down? I understand, Duke," laughed Trevenna, impervious to satire, and impenetrable even to a cut direct, who caught every bullet sent against him gaily and courageously, and played with it unharmed, as a conjuror will. (What magic has the con-

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juror? None; but he has one trick more than the world that he baffles.) "Ah! I can't let myself be put down; I'm like a cork or an outrigger—all my safety lies in my buoyancy. I have no ballast; I must float as I can. Storms sink ships of the line, and spare straws."

"Yes, sir, rubbish floats generally, I believe," said his Grace, grimly, turning his back on him as he took out his snuff-box, enamelled by Pettitot, and given him by Charles Dix. Trevenna bowed as low as though the silver-haired Sabreur had paid him a compliment, and had *not* turned his back on him.

"I accept your Grace's prophecy. Rubbish floats; *I* shall float. And when I am at the top of the wave, won't every one call my dirtiest pebbles fine pearls?"

"I think he will float," murmured the Duke, passing outward through the rooms to the noiseless, shut-off, luxurious chamber dedicated to cards, which had an altar in Chandos' house as though they were its Penates. "Sort of man to do well anywhere; be a privileged wit in a Palace, and chief demagogue in a revolution; be merry in a Bagne, and give a pat answer if he were tried for his life; hold his own in a Cabinet, and thrive in the bush. A clever fellow, an audacious fellow, a most marvellous, impudent fellow."

"An insufferable fellow! I wish Chandos would not give him the run of the house, and the run of

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the town as he does," said my Lord of Morehampton, wending his way also to the card-rooms. "The man has no idea of his place."

"I think he has only too good a one; he imagines it to be—everywhere. But the fellow will do well. He plays so admirable a game of whist; leads trumps in the bold French manner, which has a great deal to be said for it; has an astonishing recuperative power; if one play will not serve, changes his attack and defence with amazing address, and does more with a wretched hand than half the players in the clubs do with a good one. A man who can play whist like that could command a kingdom; he has learnt to be ready for every position and for every emergency. Still, with you, I don't like him," said his Grace, entering the card-room to devote himself to his favourite science at guinea points, where, despite his inherent aversion to Trevenna, he would have been willing to have had that inimitable master of the rubber for a partner.

The Duke was quite right, that a man who has trained his intellect to perfection in whist, has trained it to be capable of achieving anything that the world could offer. A campaign does not need more combination; a cabinet does not require more address; an astronomer-royal does not solve finer problems; a continental diplomatist does not prove greater tact. Trevenna had laid out the time he spent over its green table even more profitably for the ripening and

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refining of his intelligence than in the hours he gave to his blue-books; and the Duke's eulogy was but just.

His rooms were nearly full, but Chandos still glanced every now and then impatiently towards the entrance-doors that opened in the distance to the staircase. Eyes, that might well claim to be load-stars, wooed him through coquettish Venetian masks, and faces too fair for that envious disguise met his gaze wherever it turned. On his ear at that moment was the silvery ring of La Vivarol's gay raillery, and at his side was that bright exile of the Tuileries, fluttering her sapphire-studded wings as a Fille des Feux, and bewitching in her coquette's charms as any *portrait aux Amours* of Mignard. Still ever and again his eyes turned towards the entrance as he moved amongst his guests, and suddenly a new look glanced into them; they were too eloquent to women not to be unconsciously, and, for him, dangerously expressive. She who held him captive at that moment saw that look, and knew it well. She had seen it lighten for her in the forests of Compiègne when the summer moon had streamed down through the leaves on a royal hunting-party sweeping through the glades to the mellow music of hunting-horns, and they had lingered behind while the bridles dropped on their horses' necks, and only the wooing of soft words broke the silence as the hoofs sank noiseless in the deep thyme-tangled grasses.

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She knew the look of old, and followed it. It rested on the Queen of Lilies.

If that poetic loveliness had been fair in the morning light, it was far fairer now. By a delicate flattery to her host, the Lily-Queen had chosen as her impersonation the rôle of his own Lucrèce—a Byzantine Greek; and her dress, half Eastern, glowed with the brightness of Oriental hues, while the snow-white barracan floated round her like a cloud, and Byzantine jewels gleamed upon her bosom and her hair—jewels that had seen the Court of the Commneni and the sack of Dandolo—jewels that had once, perhaps, been on the proud, false brow of the Imperial Irene.

Involuntarily Chandos moved slightly forward; involuntarily there ran, even through that courtly and impassive crowd, an irrepressible low murmur of admiration. La Vivarol looked, and did not underrate one in whom she foresaw her rival.

She arched her pencilled, piquant eyebrows.

"Ah, there is your living Lucrèce! It must be charming to sketch characters and find them come to life."

Chandos lost the ironic and malicious contempt with which jealousy subtilely tipped the tone of the words, as, leaving the Countess to the homage of the maskers about her, he did for the Queen of Lilies what he had not done for any other—passed out of the inner drawing-room, where he received his guests,

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and advanced to meet the impersonation of his Lucrèce.

That moment was fatal to him—that moment in which she came on his sight as startling as though magic had summoned the living shape of his own fancies, and breathed the breath of existence into the thoughts of his poem. He would never now see her as she was; he would see in her only his own ideal, not asking whether she only resembled it as the jeweller's lily with petals of pearl and leaves of emerald, which gleams equally bright in every hand, resembles the forest-lily with its perfume and purity, growing fair and free under the sunshine of heaven, which dies under one ungentle and alien touch.

The lilies may be alike, leaf for leaf, beauty for beauty; but the fragrance is breathed but from one.

"Necromancers of old summoned the dead; you have done more, Lady Valencia, you have caught and incarnated an idler's dream. How can he ever thank you?" he said, later on, as he led her into the winter-garden, where the light was subdued after the glitter of the salons, and the hum of the ball with the strains of the music were only half heard, and through the arching aisles of palm and exotics his Circassian attendants noiselessly flitted like so many bright-hued birds.

She smiled, while a new lustre came into the thoughtful splendour of her eyes, and a soft, wild

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warmth on her cheek. Her heart was moved—or her pride.

"I must rather thank you that you do not rebuke me for being too rash. I assure you that I feared my own temerity."

"What fear could you have, save out of pity for others? My fairest fancies of Lucrèce are embodied now—perhaps only too well. What made you divine so entirely the woman I dreamt of? She only floated dimly even through my thoughts until I saw her to-night."

She looked at him almost deprecatingly, and that look on her proud and sovereign loveliness had a greater charm than on women more capable of entreaty, less used to a victorious and unquestioned power.

"Hush! That is the language of compliment. I have heard how delicately and how dangerously you will flatter."

"Indeed, no; you have heard wrongly. I never flatter. But there are some—you are one of them—to whom the simplest words of truth must needs sound the words of an exaggerated homage."

He spoke with the caressing gentleness of his habitual manner with women, while his eyes dwelt on her with a softer eloquence still. He spoke, moreover, in fullest sincerity. As he looked down on her in the shadowed and silvery light, while the pale green foliage and the burning hues of the tropical plants

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were around her and above her in their maze of hue and perfume, he might have been, in the dead Byzantine years, beside the sorceress-beauty that Justinian crowned, or that bloomed with the Eastern roses in the soft Isles of Propontis.

So far, it was well for him that he was not alone with her, though this was but the first night that she had been presented to him. All love in Chandos had been quickly roused, rather from the senses and the fancy than the heart, and roused for those to whom there was a royal road, pursued at no heavier penalty than some slight entanglement. That this royal road could not avail with the Queen of Lilies chilled her charm, and yet heightened it, as it lay like a light but unyielding rein, checking the admiration she roused in him; yet not checking it so much but that she enchained his attention while she remained in his rooms, while the bright eyes of his neglected Fille des Feux kept dangerous account of the lèze-majesté.

La Vivarol fluttered her golden wings and waltzed as though they really bore her, bird-like, through the air, and flirted with her most glittering coquetries, and smiled on him with her most bewitching *mutine* mouth; but she noted every glance that was given to another, and treasured the trifles of each slight infidelity.

If a Viardort, a court-coquette, a woman of the world, an aristocrat, could be guilty of so much

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weakness, she had loved Chandos—loved the brilliance of the eyes that looked into hers under the purple vine-shadows—loved the melody of the voice that had lingered on her ear in the orange-alleys of Fontainebleau—loved him if only because so many loved him in vain. And far more than her heart was involved in his allegiance; a thing far dearer to her, for closer and more precious to all women—her vanity.

If any one had talked to the pretty, worldly, pampered, and little-scrupulous Countess of fidelity, she would have satirised him mercilessly for such provinciality, and would have asked him where he had lived that he thought the vows of the soft religion eternal. She was infidelity itself, and held to the right divine of caprice; talk of "for ever," and she would yawn with ennui: appeal to her reason, and she would cordially assent to the truth that "nous sommes bien aises que l'on devienne infidèle, pour nous dégager de notre fidélité." But, alas for the consistency of fair philosophers! Madame applied her theories to all lovers except her own, and, while she was eloquent on the ridicule and the weariness of constancy, held inconstancy to herself as the darkest of treason.

A woman of the world never, by any hazard, is so imprudent as to show herself piqued; such gaucherie as thus to show her cards and declare herself incapable of winning the game were utterly impossible to her. La Vivarol never for a

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moment so betrayed herself; on the contrary, she praised her rival with as easy a grace as she would have praised a Velasquez, whenever she spoke of her. Nevertheless, not one glance that her lover bestowed, not one waltz that he gave, not one moment that he was held captive to Lady Valencia, escaped her. She had drawn him away—dearest triumph of womanhood!—from her sworn friend, the Duchess of Fitz-Eden, and had found her conquest exquisitely sweetened by the heart-burning she caused to that lovely idiot. She had held him enchained longer than any other ever had done; her yoke had been so skilfully woven of silken bonds that it had lasted longer than any unbroken. Of such rivals as Flora de l'Orme she had been secretly, though she never deigned to confess herself, jealous; of a rival in her own sphere she was intolerant.

She had never been given one in the eighteen months that had passed by since the *conte d'amour* à la Boccaccio had commenced in the gay autumn days of Compiègne; and La Vivarol, whose breviary was Rochefoucauld, and whose precursor was Montespan, philosophised inimitably on the rights of inconstancy, but was none the less prepared to avenge and to resent with all the force of a Corsican vendetta any homage that should dare wander from her.

And to-night she was openly, visibly, unmistakably *neglected*. As far as the courtesies and duties of a host allowed him, the Queen of Lilies usurped the

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attention and the admiration of Chandos almost entirely. The gleam of those antique Byzantine jewels was the light that he followed. In this new loveliness, so rich in its colouring, so proud in its cast, yet delicate as the fairest thought of a sculptor when rendered into the purity of the marble, he saw the portraiture of an ideal, half idly, half passionately cast into words in the work he called "Lucrèce," that had been chiefly written in hot, dreamy days in the syringa and basilica-scented air of his summer-palace on the Bosphorus, and had caught in it all the voluptuous colour, all the mystical enchantment, all the *splendida vitia* of glow and of fancy that still belong to the mere name of the East. She was no longer the beauty of the season to him; she was the incarnation of his own most golden and most treasured fancies. Side by side in his temperament with the nature of the voluptuary was the heart of the poet: she appealed to, and tempted, both. Since the days of his first loves, felt and whispered under Oriental stars to antelope-eyed Georgians, none had had so vivid a charm as this soft yet imperial beauty, who came to him in the guise of his heroine. And he let the world see it; what was far more dangerous, he let the Countess de la Vivarol.

"If Madame live twenty years, Chandos, she will never forgive you to-night," whispered Trevenna, in passing, as his host ascended the staircase, having escorted the Lady Valencia to her carriage, while a

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crowd of glittering costumes and maskers followed her footsteps—a ceremonial he never showed except to those of blood royal.

"Forgive me! What have I done?"

"What! O most innocent Lovelace, what serene sublimity of ignorance! You have piqued a jealous woman très-cher, and he who does that might have as well sat down upon a barrel of gunpowder; it is much the less fatal combustible of the two."

"Nonsense! We are none of us jealous now: everybody is too languid and too well bred. How handsome Lady Bellasysse looks to-night: widowhood must be the best cosmetic imaginable."

"All women thrive on it. Women take a husband as balloons take their ballast, because they can't *rise* without it. But the moment the heavy weight's dropped overboard, puff!—how lightly woman and balloon go up in the air."

Chandos laughed, and passed on into the throng of his courtly maskers to seek the golden wings and falcon eyes of his liege lady, and make his peace with her, as far as it could be made, without offending her more deeply by showing her a suspicion that the peace had ever been broken.

Trevenna looked after him, watching the flash of the jewels on his dress and the careless grace of his movements as he passed through the groups of his drawing-rooms; and Trevenna's eyes wandered down-

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ward through the blaze of light and the wilderness of clustered flowers, along the whole line of the marble stairs with their broad scarlet carpeting, into the depths of the hall, where at the farthest end, with the lustre from two giant candelabra full upon it, was the statue of the great minister, Philip Chandos.

His glance wandered from the living man, with the living flash of the rose-diamonds about him like so many points of sunlight, to rest upon the cold, haughty serenity of power that was spoken in the attitude of the marble limbs and the traits of the marble features in that likeness of the dead.

And he smiled a little.

"Beaux seigneurs! beaux seigneurs!" he said, softly and low to himself, "there may be games at which you will not win. Ah, my great Chandos! how you stand there in your marble pride as if you could lord it over us all still; and a stonemason's hammer could knock you to pieces now. *Sic transit gloria mundi.* Your darling Ernest is a brilliant man: you have your wish; but we may sing the old see-saw over him, too, before very long. And what will the world care for him then?"

With which inquiry, mutely addressed in self-communion to the statue where it stood in the flood of light and maze of exotics in the great hall below, Trevenna, who never danced, and had tormented people under his change of domino enough to amuse

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him (having left many in the throes of an agonising suspense as to who could have known their most hidden pet sins, and others in the paralysed torture of doubt as to whether their most terribly cherished family histories would not make popular fun next week in the *Charivari* or in *Punch*) went down-stairs and out to his night-cab as the spring morning broke in its earliest hours.

He looked back as he waited a second in the portico for the cab to make its way up to him through the long line of waiting carriages, and glittering night-lamps, and fretting horses, and shouting footmen. The music came on his ear from the distant ball-room; and as he glanced backward at the hall and staircase, with its bronzes, marbles, malachites, jasper, gold and silver candelabra, and clusters of blossom and of broad-leaved southern shrubs, while the scarlet of the laced liveries gleamed through the boughs and made it like one of the palace ante-chamber scenes of Paul Veronese's canvas, the statue rose white, calm, regal in its attitude of command, haughty as had been the life of which it was the mute and breathless symbol. It caught Trevenna's eyes again.

"Curse you!" he muttered in his teeth, while the laugh passed off his face and the mirth out of his eyes—"curse you living, and curse you dead. I will be paid, like Shylock, with a pound of flesh cut from the heart—from the heart of your brilliant

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darling. And your power cannot play the part of Portia, and stop *me;* for you are dead, mon ministre!"

And with that valediction to the dwelling across whose threshold he was ever welcomed, and to whose board he was ever bidden, Trevenna passed down the steps and drove away in the grey of the morning.

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CHAPTER V.

POÉSIE DU BEAU SEXE.

"You did very well for the first night, my dear," said Lady Chesterton, muffling herself more comfortably in her eider-down, as her carriage rolled through the silent streets in the raw of the dawn. "Certainly he admires you; that is very plain."

The Queen of Lilies, leaning back, answered nothing. There was a slight flush on her shell-like cheek, and the lashes were drooped over her dreamy, thoughtful, Velasquez eyes, that had so many poems slumbering in their liquid depths. She was in a soft, happy reverie, a little grave and yet proudly triumphant, by the shadow of the smile that lingered about her lips.

At last she spoke.

"Those were the Clarencieux diamonds he wore,

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were they not? I think they must be the finest in Europe."

Oh, poetry of a woman's soul!

And this is what men lose their heads for, and swear, while the delirium lasts, is divine.

Fratres mei, believe me, the chorus-singer whom you establish in her little bijou villa, and who, though before she came under your protection she thought it the height of good fortune to be sure of bread and cheese, now will touch nothing meaner than champagne and chicken, does not weigh you more entirely by what you are worth to her than will nine-tenths of the delicate high-born ladies, to buy whom you must barter your freedom.

There is no sort of difference in their speculations for remunerative surrender; there is only a difference in their price.

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CHAPTER VI.

"THE MANY YEARS OF PAIN THAT TAUGHT ME ART."

When his guests had left, and all the costumes that had glittered through his salons had dispersed, some half-dozen men, his most especial friends, remained, among them Cos Grenvil and the Duc de Neuilly, with his cousin, Prince Philippe d'Orvâle, and in a *cabinet de peinture*, hung chiefly with French pictures of the eighteenth century, while the Circassians brought them wines and liqueurs, sat down to Trente et Quarante, half of them taking the bank and half the table. It was a customary termination of Chandos' parties, and was at least an admirable stimulant for sweeping away too lingering memories of beauty that might have appeared there.

"Ah, that we had a Crockford's! They have left

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us no choice but to play in our own houses or to go among Greeks and blackguards—as if they could suppress our gaming any more than they can suppress our breathing, or had any more right to interfere with it!" cried Chandos, as an almond-eyed girl from the Deccan poured him out some iced hock.

"You give us a very good substitute for Crockford's, though, mon cher Ernest," said D'Orvâle. "I am disposed to regret nothing when I am once within this little painted chamber, except, perhaps, that your Hebes are a little bit too distracting."

"I think your Highness is not given to regretting any detriment from that sort of cause any more than I am," laughed Chandos, while he sat down to the table and staked his gold with the lavishness that was in his blood from men who had played through long forenoons at Whitehall with Rochester and Jermyn.

The Chandos of Clarencieux had always been famed for their love of play, from the days that they shook the dice with Charles the Second, or threw a main before supper at Choisy with Louis and Richelieu and Soubise. But his love of cards, however great it might be, had not cost him so much as another trait in his nature, *i.e.* that he loved men, and trusted them with an absolute and undoubting faith. This was the most costly of all his extravagances.

The Trente et Quarante in the little picture-cabinet was too beguiling to be quickly left; the gold

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changed hands like lightning, not going less quickly for the iced hock and the claret and Seltzer that washed it down, and the gay passages with the pretty Easterns that interrupted it. It was past six in the morning when D'Orvâle broke up the bank and gave the signal for departure, he with Chandos having been the chief losers. The latter cared only for the gay excitement of hazard; when the game was over, whether it had been favourable to him or not he cared not one straw. Generous to great excess, he never heeded the loss of money, as, it is true, he had never learned the value of it.

Ever since he could remember, money, in as much abundance as he wanted it, had been his to throw away by handsful, if it gave him any pleasure; and all that money could bring was his at a word, without seeking it. Such an atmosphere, from his childhood up, was not one to supply a nature by instinct lavish as the winds, and careless to a fault, with any thought of care for, or of caution in, expenditure.

As he went through the corridors to his own chamber, after his guests had at last left him, to take a few hours' sleep in the opening day, the deep, rich, melancholy roll of organ-notes, hushed by closed doors, but pealing the Tantum Ergo, caught his ear in the silence. Music had been a passion with him from his infancy; wealth had enabled him to indulge the passion to the full, and its strains drew him towards it now.

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"Lulli is beginning a new day while we are going to bed," he thought, as he turned down a short passage and opened the door that shut in the melody. The daylight in the chamber looked strangely white, and pure, and subdued after the glare of the myriad gas and wax lights; and his form, with the rich silks, laces, and velvets of the Edward the Fourth dress, and the sparkle of the Clarencieux diamonds, looked as strange upon the threshold of this quiet and antique room—a room almost like an oratory in the midst of the luxurious palatial Park-lane house, with its splendour, its crowds, its dissipations, and its unending gaieties. The apartment was long, lighted by two windows, through which the just-arisen sun poured in; and the antique shape of the walnut-wood furniture, the ebony music and reading desks, and the carved ivory Christ above a table in a recess, gave it the look of a religious retreat, especially as at the farther end stood an organ, with its gilded tubes glistening against the dark walnut of its case, while from its chords there swelled the harmony of the great Sacramental Hymn.

The musician was a man of five or six and twenty, whose head had the spiritual beauty of Shelley's; the features fair and delicate to attenuation; the eyes large, dark, and lustrous; the mouth very perfect, both in form and expression; the whole face of singular patience and singular exaltation. His lower limbs were all but useless; they were slightly paralysed and much

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crippled, and his shoulders were bowed with a marked but in no way repulsive deformity. Music, grand as Beethoven ever dreamed, or Pasta ever sang, woke from his genius into life. But in the ways of the world Guido Lulli was unlearned as a child; for the labours of earth he was as helpless as any bird whose wings are broken. Men would have called him a half-witted fool; in the days of Alcuin or of Hildebrand he would have been held a saint; simply, he was but a cripple and an enthusiast, whom nature had cruelly maltreated, but whom genius had divinely recompensed.

At the opening of the door he turned, and a radiation of pleasure broke like sunlight over his face, while into his eyes came the glorious look of love and of fidelity that beams for us in the clear brown noble eyes of a dog.

He strove to rise—to him a matter of so slow and painful an effort. Before he could do so, Chandos crossed the room, lightly and swiftly, and laid his hands on the musician's shoulders with a kind and almost caressing gesture.

"Ah, Lulli! you are awake and employed before I have yet been in bed. You shame me here with your flood of sunlight. No! do not rise, do not leave off; go on with the Tantum Ergo, while I listen. It is a grand hymn to the day."

Lulli looked at him still with that loving, reverent, grateful look of a dog's deathless fidelity.

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"Monseigneur, the sound of your voice to me is like the sound of water to the thirsty in a desert place," he said, simply, in sweet, soft, southern French, giving, in earnest veneration to his host and master, the title that Trevenna often gave in jest.

Chandos smiled on him, a sunlit, generous smile, gentle as a woman's.

"And so is your music to me; so there is no debt on either side. Go on."

"My life is one long debt to you. God will pay it to you; I never can."

The words were heartfelt, and his eyes, looking upward still, uttered them with still more eloquence. Contrast more forcible than these, as they were now together, could scarcely have been found in the width of the world. The attenuated and enfeebled cripple, with his useless limbs, his bowed shoulders, and his life worn with physical suffering, that bound him like a captive, and robbed him of all the power and the joy of existence, beside the splendid grace of the man who stood above him in a strength too perfect for dissipation to leave the slightest trace of weariness upon it, and with a beauty dazzling as a woman's, fresh from every pleasure of the sight or sense, and full of all the proudest ambitions, the richest enjoyments, and the most careless insouciance of a superb manhood and a cloudless fortune. A contrast more startling, nor, for one, more bitter, could not have been placed side by side. But there was no envy

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here. The loyal gratitude of Lulli had no jealous taint upon it that could have made him, even for one moment, see anything save gladness and gentleness in the gracious presence of the man to whom he owed more than existence. He could no more have felt envy to his benefactor than he could have taken up a knife and stabbed him.

Six years before, travelling through southern Spain, an accident to his carriage had detained Chandos at a wayside inn in the very heart of the Vega. Whiling away the tedium of such detention by sketching an old Moorish bridge that spanned a torrent, high in air, he heard some music that fixed his attention, the music of a violin played with exquisite pathos. He inquired for the musician: a handsome gitaña, with a basket of melons on her head, gladly answered his inquiries. The violinist was a youth dying, as she thought, in a châlet near. He was alone, very poor, and a stranger. The words were sufficient to arrest Chandos; he sought out the châlet, and found the musician lying on a straw pallet and dying, as the girl had said, rather from hunger than any other illness, but with his large burning eyes fixed on the sun that was setting beyond the screen of tangled vine-leaves that hung over the hut-door, and his hands still drawing from the chords, in wild and mournful strains, the music for which life alone lingered in him. He was a mere lad of twenty years, and was a cripple. Chandos only saw to

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rescue him. Food, hope, and the sound of a voice that spoke gently and pityingly to him, fused fresh existence into the dying boy; he lived, and his life from that moment was sheltered by the man who had found him perishing on the Spanish hills.

Guido Lulli had lived in Chandos' household, now in town, now at Clarencieux, never treated as a dependent, but surrounded by all that could alleviate or make him forget his calamity, out of the world by his own choice as utterly as though he were in a monastery, spending his days and nights over his organ and his music-score, and never having harder task than to organise the music of those concerts and operas in the private theatre at Clarencieux, for which his patron's entertainments were noted.

Guido Lulli's was far from the only life that Chandos, the pleasure-seeker and the voluptuary, had redeemed, defended, and saved.

Obedient to his wish, the melody of the Catholic chant rolled through the stillness of the early morning, succeeding strangely to the wit, the laughter, the revelry, and the hazard of a few moments previous. It was precisely such a succession of contrasts of which his life was made up, and which gave it its vivid and unfading colour. Closely interwoven, and ever trenching one upon another, the meditative charm of art and of thought succeeded with him to the pleasures of the world. He would pass from all the intoxication and indulgence of an Alcibiades to all the

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thoughtful solitude of an Augustine; and it was this change, so complete and so perpetually variable, which, while it was produced by the mutability of his temperament, made, in a large degree, the utter absence in his life of all knowledge of satiety, all touch of weariness.

He listened now, leaning his arm on the sill of the open window that looked out upon the gardens below, fresh, even in town, with the breath of the spring on their limes and acacias, and the waking song of the nest-birds greeting the day. The rolling notes of the organ pealed out in all their solemnity, the cathedral rhythm swelling out upon the silence of the dawn, that had been heard by him so often in the splendour of St. Peter's at Easter-time, in the hush of Notre Dame at midnight mass, and in the stillness of Benedictine and Cistercian chapels in the chesnut-woods of Tuscany and the lonely mountain-sides of hill-locked Austrian lakes. A thousand memories of foreign air were in the deep-drawn and melodious chords; a thousand echoes of the dead glories of mediæval Rome rose with the

Tantum ergo Sacramentum
Veneremur cernui.

A helpless and fragile cripple in the world, no stronger than a reed, and ignorant of all things save his art, once before his organ, once in the moment of his inspiration, Guido Lulli had the grandeur of a master, the force and the omnipotence of a king. In

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his realm he reigned supreme; and Chandos not seldom left his titled associates and his careless pleasures to come and listen to these melodies in his protégé's still, monastical chamber, as he heard them now.

He leant against the embrasure, looking out into the tangled mass of leaves beneath, and letting his thoughts float dreamily down the stream of sound, blent with the lustre of the smiling eyes and the gleam of the imperial beauty that had newly caught his memory and his fancy. Entangled with the imaginations of his own Byzantine poem, she haunted him with that early, careless whisper, soft, idle, and painless, of love in its first moments — love that is but a mere momentary, passionate impulse, and may never ripen to more. The lull of early morning, the measure of the music passing onward without pause into the masses of Mozart and Mendelssohn, fell gently and mellowly on him after the crowded hours of the past night and day. As the chords thrilled through the silence of the breaking day, joining the clear notes of the awakening birds beneath amidst the leaves, his thoughts wandered away, dreamy and disconnected, ranging over the cloudless years of a successful life, in which all the memories were painted as with an Elizabethan pencil, without shadow. In them he had never known one grey touch of disappointment, far less still one dark taint of calamity; in them woman's lips had never betrayed him, nor man's hand been raised against

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him. Fortune had favoured, and the world had loved him. No regret lay on him, and no unfulfilled desire left its trail. There was nothing in his career he wished undone; there were no memories in it that it would have been pain to open; there were no pages of it that were not bright with soft, rich, living colour. He had passed through life, having escaped singularly all the shadows that lie on it for most men; and he had, far more than most, what may be termed the faculty for happiness—a gift, in any temperament whose wisdom and whose beauty the world too little recognises.

His thoughts, floating on with the melodious chords that swelled in wave on wave of sound through the quiet of the morning, drifted back by some unfollowed chain of association to the remembrance of the hot autumn sunset at Clarencieux, when, as a child, he had dreamt his chivalric fancies over the story of Arthur, and had told his father what his future should be.

"Have I kept my word?" he mused, as he leant his arms on the embrasure of the window, while the early light fell on the gold and the jewels of his Plantagenet masquerade dress.

The lofty, idealic, impossible dreams, so glorious in their impracticability, so fair in their sublime folly, in which boyhood had aspired to a soilless fame and an heroic sovereignty such as this earth has never seen, and never can see, recurred to him with some-

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thing that was almost, for the moment, a passing sadness—the same sadness which, in the words of Jean Paul, lies in music, "because it speaks to us of things that in all our life we find not, and never shall find.

"Have I kept my word?" he thought. "I rule the world of pleasure, but I meant *then* a wider world than that. They follow me because I lead the fashion, because I amuse them better than any other, because they gain some distinction by cutting their coats and wearing their wristbands like mine; but that is not the fame either he or I meant in those years. They talk of me, they imitate me, they obey me, they quote me, they adore my works, and they court my approbation; but am I very much more, after all, than a mere idler?"

The genius latent in him, which in his present life only found careless expression in glittering bagatelles and poems, half Lucretian, half Catullan, stirred in him now with that restlessness for higher goals, that refusal to be satisfied with actual and present achievement, which characterise genius in all its forms—that unceasing and irrepressible "striving towards the light" which pursued Goethe throughout life, and was upon his lips in death. Dissatisfaction in no shape ever touched Chandos: his years were too cloudless, and too full of fairest flavour, for discontent ever to be known in them. It was but rarely, now and then, when, in the pauses of his pleasures and

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his fame, the remembrance of his childhood's grand, visionary, impalpable ambitions came back to him—that the thought swept across him of having insufficiently realised them, of having been in some sort untrue to them, of losing in a dazzling celebrity the loftier purity of those early and impossible dreams.

It was not wholly true, nor wholly just towards himself. Egotism had little place in his life; full though it was of a Greek-like softness and Greek-like idolatry of beauty and of pleasure, of an epicureanism that shunned all pain and abhorred all roughness and all harshness, the calamities of others were widely succoured by him, and the bead-roll was long of those who owed him the most generous gifts that man can owe to man. He enjoyed, but he never forgot that others suffered. He loved the ease, the beauty, and the serenity of existence; but he also did his uttermost that others should know them too.

"I *enjoy*," he thought now, as he leant out into the morning sunshine. "It is the supreme wisdom of life, and the best gift of the gods is to know it! The Greeks were right, and in this age men remember it too little. Old Guy Patin was a million times wiser than all the Frondeurs, sitting under the summer shade of his Cormeille cherry-trees with Lucretius, and Lucilius, and Antoninus, while his friends killed each other with fret and fume. Bonaparte said, 'I have conquered Cairo, Milan, and Paris, in less than

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two years, and yet, if I died to-morrow, I should only get half a page in any biographical dictionary;' but to get a line, or even only to get an obituary notice and oblivion, men toil a life away, and consume their years in thankless, grinding, ceaseless labour. The benighted opticism of vanity! 'The succession of the nations is but as a torch-race.' What is it to feed the flame of one of the torches for a passing second—a spark that flares and dies? The Greek ideal of Dionysus, with the ivy on his brow, and the thyrsus in his hand, bringing joy wherever he moved, while the wine flowed and nature bloomed wherever the god's foot fell, is the ideal of the really happy life, the life that knows how to enjoy."

The thoughts drifted through his mind lightly, dreamily, as the swell of the organ-notes poured on. It was true, he enjoyed; and his temper, like the temper of the Greeks, asked only this of life.

Chandos was not only famous, not only gifted, not only steeped to the lips in delicate and sensuous delight; he was much more than all these—he was happy.

How many lives can say that?

The music paused suddenly, dropping down in its gorgeous festival of sound as a lark suddenly drops to the grass in the midst of its flood of song. Chandos turned as it ceased and broke his idle thread of musing reverie, while he laid his hand gently on the musician's shoulder.

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"Dear Lulli, while one hears your music, one is in Avillion. You make me dream of the old serene and sacred Πείρατα γαίης. Tell me, have you everything you wish? Is there nothing that can bring you more pleasure?"

Guido Lulli shook his head, lifting up his lustrous southern antelope eyes—the eyes of Provence—with the fidelity and gratitude that were rivalled in him by his art alone.

"I should be little worthy all I owe to you, if I could find one want unsatisfied."

"Owe! You owe me nothing. Who would give me such music as you can give? It is not every one who is fortunate enough to have a Mozart in his house. I wish I could serve you better in the search that is nearest your heart. We have done all we could, Guido."

His voice was very gentle, and had a certain hesitation. He approached a subject that had a bitterness, both of grief and of shame, to his listener; and Chandos, carelessly disdainful of a Prince's wishes, was careful of the slightest jar that could wound the sensitiveness of the man who was dependent on him.

Lulli's head sank, and a dark shadow passed over his face—a flush of shame and of anger, as heavy and as passionate as could arise in a temperament so visionary and tender to feminine softness, mingled, too, with a sorrow far deeper than wrath can reach.

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"It is enough," he said, simply, his words hushed, low, and bitter in his throat; "we are certain of her shame."

"Not certain," said Chandos, compassionately, while his hand still lay lightly on the musician's shoulder. "Where there is doubt, there is always hope; and judgment should never be passed till everything is known. Do not be harsh to her, even in thought."

"Harsh? Am I harsh?"

Lulli's head drooped till it rested on his hands, while in the accent of the words there was a grief beyond all words, and a self-reproach piteous in its contrition.

"Not in your heart ever, I know," said Chandos, with that almost caressing tenderness of pity which always came upon him for this childlike and unworldly visionary, who felt so passionately, yet could only act so feebly.

"Not to her, not to her—no!" murmured the Provençale, while his face was still sunk on his hands; "but to *him*. Not even to know his name; not even to know where he harbours; not to tell where she is, that when she is deserted and wretched she might be saved from lower depths still!"

A terrible pain shook and stifled his voice, and Chandos was silent. The musician's sorrow was one to which no consolation could be offered, and no hope suggested.

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"I have had all done to trace her that is possible," he said, at last; "but two years have passed, and there seems no chance of ever succeeding: all clue appears lost. Do you think that she may have gone by another name at the time that her lover, whoever he may be, first saw her?"

"It is possible, monseigneur; I cannot tell," said Lulli, slowly, with a pathos of weariness more touching than all complaint and lament. "Be it as it will, she is dead to me; but—but—if we could know *him*, helpless cripple as I am, I would find strength enough to avenge my wrong and hers."

He raised himself as he said it, his slight, bent form quivering and instinct with sudden force, his pale and hollow cheek flushed, his eyes kindling. It was like electric vitality flashing for one brief moment into a dead man's limbs.

Chandos looked at him with a profound pity. To him, a man of the world, a courtier, a lover of pleasure, the untutored, chivalrous simplicity of this idealist roused infinite compassion. He saw brought home to Guido Lulli, as a terrible and heart-burning anguish, those amours which, in his own world and his own life, were but the caprice and amusement of idle hours, the subject of a gay, indifferent jest. He had never before reflected how much these careless toys may chance to cost in their recoil to others.

He leant his hand with a warmer pressure on the musician's shoulder.

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"I wish I could aid you more, Guido; but there is nothing that I know of that has been left untried. Strive to forget both: neither is worth enough to give you pain. You believe, at least, that I have had every effort used for you, although it has been in vain?"

Lulli looked at him with a slight smile—a smile that passed over the suffering and the momentary passion on his face like an irradiation of light; it was so full of sublime and entire faith.

"Believe *you*, monseigneur? Yes, as I believe in God."

It was the simple truth, and paid back to Chandos his own love for men, and faith in them, in his own coin. He was touched by the naïf words.

"I thank you. I am *your* debtor then, Lulli," he said, gently. "I must leave you now, or I shall have no sleep before the day is fairly up; but I will see you again some time during the morning. If you think of anything that has not been done, or might be done again, with any hope to find Valeria, tell me, and I will give directions for it. Adieu!"

He left the chamber, the flash of his diamonds and the imperial blue of his dress glancing bright in the beams of the young day. Lulli turned his head, and followed him with the wistful gaze that seemed to come from so far a distance—followed him as the eyes of a dog follow the shadow of its master.

"So generous, so pitiful, so gentle, so noble! If

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I could only live to repay him!" he murmured, half aloud, as the door closed upon the kingly grace and splendid manhood of his saviour and his solitary friend. Vast as was the contrast, hopelessly wide as was the disparity between them, there was not one pang of jealousy in the loyal heart of the crippled musician.

Then, with the last echo of his patron's step, his head drooped again, and the listless, lifeless passiveness, the weary and suffering indifference, which always lay so heavily upon him, save at such times when his affections or his art struck new vitality through him, returned once more, while his fingers lay motionless upon the ivory keys. Although happy (as far as happiness could be in common with his shattered and stricken life) in the artistic seclusion in which he was allowed to dwell, and in the unbroken pursuit of his art which Chandos enabled him to enjoy, there was one sorrow on him weightier than any of his personal afflictions.

The only thing that had ever loved him was a child, several years younger than himself, his cousin, orphaned and penniless like himself, a bright, caressing child, to keep whom in some poor shape of comfort in their old home of Arles, Lulli had beggared his own poverty, till (sending to her every coin that he possessed) he had been near his grave from sheer famine when Chandos had found him among the hills of the Vega. For some time he had

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never mentioned the name of Valeria to his patron, from the shrinking and sensitive delicacy of his nature, which dreaded to press another supplicant and dependent on his patron's charity. All he could give (and Chandos' provision for him made that now not inconsiderable—indeed, what seemed a mine of wealth to the simplicity of the Provençale) he sent to Arles for Valeria Lulli, who was lodged with an old Canoness of the city, and began to be noted, as she grew older, as the most perfect contralto in the girls' choir in all southern France. See her he could not; a sense of duty to the man by whom he had been redeemed from death, and the infirmities of his own health, which that nigh approach of death had more utterly enfeebled, prevented him from returning to Provence. But he heard of her; he heard from her; he knew that she was drawing near womanhood in safe shelter, and a happy, if obscure, home, through him; and it sufficed for him. His affection for her was the tender solicitude of a brother, shut out from any tinge of a warmer emotion, both through his own sense of how utterly banned from him, by his calamity, was all thought of woman's love, and through his own memory of Valeria, which was but of a fair and loving child.

Two years before this morning in which Chandos had listened to the Tantum Ergo, a heavy blow fell on the musician, smiting down all the fond, vague thoughts with which he had associated Valeria's

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dawning womanhood with the dawning success of his own ambition in his art. A long silence had passed by, bringing no tidings of her: whilst his anxiety grew uncontrollable, and knew itself powerless, he repented of the silence he had preserved on her name to his only friend. He inquired tidings of the Canoness, but received none. Chandos was away, yachting in the Mediterranean, and spending the late summer and the autumn in the East; the winter also he spent in Paris. When, with the spring, Lulli saw him once more, he told him then of Valeria, and entreated his aid to learn the cause of the silence that had fallen between him and Arles. Chandos gave it willingly; he sent his own courier abroad to inquire for the young choral-singer. All answer with which he returned was that the Canoness had died in the course of that summer, that Valeria Lulli had disappeared from the city, and that neither priest nor layman could tell more, save that it was the general supposition she had fled with a handsome milord Anglais, who had visited the cathedral, heard her singing, learned her residence, and visited her often during the summer months. He, too, had left Arles without any one remembering his name, or knowing where he had gone. The gossips of the still, solemn, old Roman city had noted him often with Valeria at vesper-time, and underneath the vine-hung grey stone coping of her casement in the Canoness' little *tourelle*. And Valeria had grown up

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in all the rich traditional beauty of the magnificent women of Arles.

So the history ran, brief, but telling a world. To Guido Lulli there was room neither for doubt nor hope; it was plain as the daylight to him, and needed not another line added to it. It cut him to the heart. Shame for the honour of his name, which, though sunk into poverty, claimed descent from him whose divine strains once floated down the rose-aisles of Versailles, passionate bitterness against the unknown stranger who had robbed him, grief for the loss and the dishonour of the one whom he had cherished from her childhood,—all these were terrible to him; but they were scarcely so cruel as the sting of ingratitude from a life that he alone had supported, and for which he had endured, through many years, deprivations uncounted and solicitude unwearying. He said but little; but the iron went down deep into his gentle suffering nature, and left a wound there that was never closed.

No more had ever been learned of the fate of Valeria; it sank into silence, and all the efforts exerted by his patron's wealth, and by the ingenuity of his hirelings, failed to bring one light on the surface of the darkness that covered her lost life. As Lulli had said, she was dead to him. But the pain she had dealt was living, and would live long. Natures like Lulli's suffer silently, but suffer greatly; and now, when the monastical silence closed in again around

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him, as the sound of Chandos' steps died off the morning stillness, and the early rays only strayed on the ivory whiteness of the carved Passion above the little shrine of his antique chamber, he sat there listless and lost in thought, his head sunk, his hands resting immovably upon the keys with which he could give out fit music for the gods, the sadness on him which ever oppressed him when he came back from his own best-beloved world of melodious sound, into the coarse, harsh, weary world of fact and of existence.

He thought of the bright southern child whose desolate life he had succoured, as he had used to see her, with the sunlight on her hair while she gathered bowing crowns of summer lilies, and feathery wealth of seeding grasses, among the giant ruins of the Roman amphitheatre, where the Gaul and the Frank, the Latin and the Greek, lay mouldering in the community of death, while the arrowy Rhône flashed its azure in the light, and the purple grapes grew mellow in the golden languor of a southern noon.

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CHAPTER VII.

LATET ANGUIS IN HERBA.

"LOTS of news!" said Trevenna, crushing up a pile of journals as he sat at breakfast in Park-lane; his second breakfast, of course, for which he commonly dropped in as Chandos was taking his first. He managed all his friend's concerns, both monetary and household, both in town, in Paris, and at Clarencieux, and had always something or other on which to confer with his patron at the only hour in the day at which Chandos was ever likely to be found disengaged—some stud from which to suggest a purchase, some new pictures coming to the hammer of which to bring a catalogue, some signature to a cheque or a deed to require, or some expensive temptation to suggest to one who, as he well knew, had never been taught providence, and never been accustomed to resist

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either pleasure or inclination. This last was a Mephistophelean occupation to which Trevenna was specially suited. He tempted delightfully, always putting in just so much of bantering dissuasion to enhance the charm and spur on the tempted, as would furnish the truffles to the game, till the *truffé* he held out became irresistible.

"Lots of news!" he cried, now washing the quantity down with a draught of Yquem. "Queer thing a paper is; sort of prosaic phœnix, eh? Kings die, ministers die, editors go to pot, its staff drops under the sod, governments smash, nations swamp, actors change; but on goes the paper, coming out imperturbably every morning. Nothing disturbs it: deaths enrich it; wars enlarge it. If a royal head goes into the grave, it politely prints itself with a black border by way of gratifying his soul, and sells itself to extreme advantage with a neat dovetailing of 'Le roi est mort,' and 'Vive le roi.' Queer thing, a paper!"

"A melancholy thing in that light," said Chandos, as he drank his chocolate. "To think of the swarm of striving life pressed into a single copy of the *Times* is as mournful as Xerxes' crowds under Mount Ida, though certainly not so poetic."

"Mournful?—don't see it," responded Trevenna, who never did see anything mournful in life, except the miserable mistake by which he had not been born a millionnaire. "It's rather amusing to see all the

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pother and bother, and know that they'll all be dead, every man of 'em, fifty years hence; because one always has an unuttered conviction that some miracle will happen by which one won't die oneself. How thoroughly right Lucretius is: it *is* so pleasant to see other men in a storm while one's high and dry beyond reach of a drop; and to watch them all rushing and scuttling through life in the *Times* columns is uncommonly like watching them rush through a tempest. You know they'll all of them get splashed to the skin, and not one in ten thousand reach their goal."

Chandos laughed.

"But when you are in the tempest, my friend, I fancy you would be very glad of a little more sympathy than you give, and would be very grateful for an umbrella?"

"Oh! the devil take sympathy! Give me success."

"The selection is not new! But in defeat——"

"In defeat?—let it go ten leagues farther to the deuce! Sympathy in success might be genuine—people would scramble for the bonbons I dropped; but sympathy in defeat was never anything better yet than a sneer delicately veiled."

"Poor humanity! You will allow nothing good to come out of Nazareth—a sweeping verdict, when by Nazareth you mean mankind. Well! I would rather give twenty rogues credit for being honest men, than wrong one honest man by thinking him a rogue. To

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think evil unjustly is to create evil; to think too well of a man may end in making him what you have called him."

Trevenna smiled, his arch, humorous smile, that danced in the mirth of his eyes, and twinkled so joyously and mischievously about the corners of his mouth.

"If it be your preference to think too well of men, très-cher, you can hardly miss gratifying it. Rogues grow thick as blackberries. Only when *Turcaret*, whom you think the mirror of honour, makes you bankrupt, and *Gingillino*, whom you believe the soul of probity, makes off with your plate, and *Tartuffe*, whom you have deemed a saint of the first water, forges a little bill on your name, blame nobody but your own delightful and expensive opticism, that's all! Don't you know, you think too well of *me?*"

There was a shade of earnestness, and, for the instant, of regret in his bold bright eyes as they fastened themselves on Chandos's; there was, for the moment, one faint impulse of compunction and of conscience in his heart. He knew that the man before him trusted him so utterly, so loyally; he knew that the witness of the world to sink and shame him would only have made the hand of Ernest Chandos close firmer on his own. That hand was stretched out now in a gesture of generous, frank grace, of true and gallant friendship. The action was very rare with Chandos, and spoke with a great eloquence.

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"You, know I have no fear of that. Our friendship is of too old a date."

Trevenna hesitated a moment, one slight, impalpable second of time, not to be counted, not to be noted, then his hand closed on that held out to him.

The momentary better thought had gone from him. When he took the hand of Chandos thus, few criminals had ever fallen lower than he. Were Catholic fancies true, and "guardian angels with us as we walk," his guardian spirit would have left Trevenna then for ever.

"Well!" he said, with his mirthful and ringing laugh, like his voice, clear and resonant as a clarion, "you found me in no irreproachable place, mon Prince, at any rate; so you can't complain if I turn out a scamp. A debtors' prison wasn't precisely the place for the lord of Clarencieux to choose an ally."

"Many a 'lord of Clarencieux' has gamed away his wit and his wealth, which was your only sin then, my dear fellow. I am not afraid of the consequences. So many people who speak well of themselves are worth nothing, that, by inverse ratio, Trevenna, you, who speak so ill of yourself, must be worth a great deal. You look at some things at too low a standing-point, to my fancy, to be sure; but you see as high as your stature will let you, I suppose."

"Of course. Literally and metaphorically, you're a very tall man, and I'm a very short one; and, literally

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and metaphorically, if you see stars I don't, I see puddles you don't; if you watch for planets I forget, I watch for quicksands you forget. My stature will be the more useful of the two in the end. Apropos of quicksands, the first architect of them in the country was magnificent on the Cat Tax last night."

"Who? Milverton?"

"Yes, Milverton! As if you'd forgotten who was Exchequer! If he were a handsome *coryphée*, now, you'd be eager to hear every syllable about the début. The speech was superb! To hear him! he drew the line so admiringly between the necessary and humble mouser, helpmate of the housewife, and the pampered, idle Angora, fed on panada, and kept from caprice; he touched so inimitably on the cat in Egypt and Cyprus, tracing the steps by which a deity had become a drudge, and the once-sacred life been set to preserve the pantries from mice; he threw so choice a sop to the Exeter Hall party by alluding to its fall as a meet judgment on a heathen deity, and richly merited by a creature that was mentioned in Herodotus and not in the Bible; he sprinkled the whole so classically with Greek quotations that greatly imposed on the House, and greatly posed it, its members having derived hazy Attic notions from Greek cribs at the 'Varsities and Grote on rainy afternoons in the country. By Jove! the whole thing was masterly! The Budget will pass both chambers."

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Chandos laughed as he ate the mellowest of peaches.

"And that you call public life?—a slavery to send straws down the wind, and twist cables of sand! The other evening I drove Milverton to Claire Rahel's. Just at her door a hansom tore after us; his Whip dashed up. The House was about to divide; Milverton must go down directly. And he went. There is an existence to spend! Fancy the empty platitudes of the benches, instead of the bright mots at Rahel's; the empty froth of place-men patriots, instead of the tasteful foam of sparkling Moselle!"

"Fie, fie, Chandos! You shouldn't satirise St. Stephen's, out of filial respect."

"The St. Stephen's of my father's days was a very different affair. They are not politicians now; they are only place-men: they don't dictate to the Press; the Press dictates to them: they don't care how the country is lowered; they only care to keep in office. When there is an European simoon blowing through the House, I may come and look on; so long as they brew storms in the saucer, I have no inclination for the tea-party. Would *you* like public life, Trevenna?"

"I? What's the good of my liking anything? I'm a Pariah of the pavé, a Chicot to the clubs. I can only float myself in dinner-stories and gossip."

"Gossip! You inherit the souls of Pepys and Grimm. That such a clever fellow as you can——"

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"Precisely because I am a clever fellow do I collect what everybody loves, except *raffineurs* like yourself. I am never so welcome as when I take about a charmingly chosen bundle of characters to be crushed, and reputations to be cracked. To slander his neighbour is indirectly to flatter your listener: of course, slander is welcome. Every one likes to hear something bad of somebody else; it enhances his comfort when he *is* comfortable, and makes him think 'somebody's worse off than I am' when he isn't."

Chandos laughed.

"I wonder if there were ever such a combination of Theophrastus' bitterness and Plautus' good humour in any living being before you, Trevenna? You judge humanity like Rochefoucauld, and laugh with it like Falstaff; and you tell men that they are all rascals, as merrily as if you said they were all angels."

"A great deal more merrily, I suspect. One can get a good deal of merriment out of rogues—there is no better company under the sun; but angels would be uncommonly heavy work. Sin's the best salt."

"Mr. Paul Leslie is waiting, sir," said the groom of the chambers, approaching his master. "He says that he comes by appointment, or——"

"Quite right; I will see him in the library," said Chandos, as he rose, having finished his breakfast, and heard all the various things with which his prime minister had come charged.

"Paul Leslie? That's a new name; I don't know

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it," said Trevenna, who made a point of knowing every one who came to his host, no matter how insignificant.

"Very likely. He never gives dinners, and could not lend you a sou."

There was a certain careless, disdainful irony in the words, half unconscious to Chandos himself. He had all the manner of the *vieille cour*, all its stately grace, and all its delicate disdain; and, cordial as his regard was for Trevenna, and sincere as was his belief that the bluntness and professed egotism of the man covered a thousand good qualities, and proclaimed a candour bright and open as the day, he was not, he could not be, blind to the fact that Trevenna never sought or heeded any living soul except those who could benefit him.

"I understand," laughed Trevenna: with a riding-whip about his shoulders he would still have laughed good naturedly. "One of your protégés, of course; some Giotto who was drawing sheep when the Clarencieux Cimabue saw him; some starving Chatterton who has plucked up heart of grace to write and ask the author of 'Lucrèce' to give him the *magna nominis umbra*. Tell him to turn navvy or corn-chandler, Chandos, before he worships the Muses without having five thousand a year to support those dissipated ladies upon; and twenty years hence, he'll thank you while he eats his fat bacon with a relish in

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the pot-house, or weighs out his pottles of barley in sensible contentment."

"You are a thorough Englishman, Trevenna; you would make a poet an exciseman, and expect him to be serenely grateful for the patronage! Pray, how many of those who honour 'the Muses,' as you call them, have had five thousand a year, or had even their daily bread when they started, for that matter? I must give this boy his audience; so I may not see you till we meet in the Park or the clubs. You dine with me to-night? There is a triad of serene highnesses coming, and German royalty is terribly oppressive society."

"Oh, I will be here, monseigneur: I obey orders. You want me at your dinners as Valois wanted Triboulet, eh? The jester is welcomed for the nonsense he talks, and may be more familiar than guests of higher degree."

Chandos turned as he was leaving the room, struck by a certain tone in the words, all light and good humoured as they were; and he leant his hand on John Trevenna's shoulder with the self-same gesture he had used to the musician Lulli.

"Triboulet? What are you thinking of? Men of your talent bring their own welcome, and are far more creditor than debtor to society. Surely, Trevenna, you never doubt the sincerity of my friendship?"

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The other looked up with his bright bonhomie.

"You are a Sir Calidore of courtesy. No; I am as sure of the quality of your friendship as I am of the quality of your clarets. I can't say more; and, as the world bows down before you, the distinction of it is very gratifying. Besides, you have the best *chef* in town; and I dearly love a friend that gives good dinners."

Chandos laughed. Trevenna always amused him; the utter absence of flattery refreshed him, and he knew the world too well not to know that sincerity and warmth of feeling were full as likely to lie under the frankly confessed egotism as under the suaver protestations of other men. Yet the answer chilled him ever so slightly, jarred on him ever so faintly. A temperament that is *never* earnest is at times well-nigh as wearisome as a temperament that is never gay; there comes a time when, if you can never touch to any depth, the ceaseless froth and brightness of the surface will create a certain sense of impatience, a certain sense of want. He felt this for the moment with Trevenna. Trevenna would *never* be serious; he never gave anything deeper than his merry and good-humoured banter.

"No wonder the women are so fond of the caresses of those *mains blanches;* they are as white and as soft and as delicate as a girl's—curse him!" thought Trevenna, while his eyes glanced from Chandos' hand,

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as it fell from his shoulder, and on to his own, which was broad, strong, and coarse, both in shape and in fibre, though tenacious in hold and characteristic in form. The hand of Chandos was the hand of the aristocrat and of the artist moulded in one; Trevenna's that of the working man, of the agile gymnast, of the hardy mountain climber.

The thought was petty and passionate as any woman's; the envy puerile and angered to a feminine and childish littleness. But this was Trevenna's one weakness, this jealousy of all these differences of caste and of breeding,—as his sonnets were Richelieu's, as his paintings were Goethe's, as his deformed limb was Byron's.

The warm friendship offered him and proved to him was forgotten in the smart of a small wounded vanity. A straw misplaced will make us enemies; a millstone of benefits hung about his neck may fail to anchor down by us a single friend. We may lavish what we will—kindly thought, loyal service, untiring aid, and generous deed—and they are all but as oil to the burning, as fuel to the flame, when spent upon those who are jealous of us.

Despite, however, his hearty curse upon his host, Trevenna went on with his breakfast complacently, while Chandos left him to give audience (and something more) to the young artist, a clever boy without a sou, with the talent of a Scheffer, and the poverty

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of a Chatterton, whom he was about to enable to study in peace in Rome. Trevenna was a sagacious man, a practical man, and did not allow his own personal enmities, or the slight circumstance of his having mentally damned the man whose hospitality he enjoyed, to interfere with his appreciation of his lobster-cutlets, liqueurs, pâtés, and amontillado.

In truth, to eat and drink like Lucullus and Sancho Panza merged in one, at the expense of Chandos, had a certain relish for Trevenna that gave the meals a better flavour than all Dubosc's sauces could have achieved. Trevenna was only the choicest of gourmets at table, but he was the most insatiable of gourmands in enmity.

Then, when he had fairly finished a breakfast that would have done honour to the inventions of an Ude, he went out to the clubs—it was two o'clock in the day—to keep up his reputation as a popular talker with a variety of charming, damaging stories, and inimitable specimens of inventive ingenuity, such as made him welcome at all the best tables, and well received even in the smoking sanctum of the Guards' Club. Trevenna had not dined at his own expense for ten years; he knew so well how to amuse society. His manufactures were matchless; they were the most adroit and lasting slanders of all—slanders that had a foundation of truth.

"What's up, Charlie? You look rather blue," said

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that easiest and most familiar of "diners-out," whom no presence could awe, and no coolness could ice, as he sauntered now down Pall-Mall with a young dandy of the Foreign Office, who had played so much chicken-hazard, and planned so many Crown and Sceptre and Star and Garter fêtes in the mornings which he devoted to the State, that he had come to considerable grief over "floating paper."

Charlie nodded silently, pulling his amber moustaches. He was rather a handsome, gallant young fellow; England shows his style by the dozens any day in the season—a good style, too, when it comes out to the test in Canadian winters, Crimean camps, and mountain India campaigns.

"*Tight*, eh? Dal won't bleed?" asked Trevenna, with a good-natured, almost affectionate interest. "Dal" was Lord Dallerstone, Charlie's elder brother.

"Bleed? no. He's up a tree himself," murmured the victim. "It's those confounded Tindall and Co. people; they've got bills of mine—bought them in—and they put the screw on no end."

"Tindall and Co.? Ah! hard people, ain't they?"

"Devils!" murmured Charlie, still in the sleepiest of tones. "It's that vile old Jew, Mathias, you know; *he's* the firm, no doubt of it, though he keeps it so dark. 'Pay or——' That's all they say; and I've no more idea where to get any money than that pug."

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"Bought your paper up? that is awkward work," said Trevenna, musingly. "I hardly see what you can do. I know, the Tindall people are very sharp—old Hebrew beggar is, as you say, at least. How much breathing-time do they give you?"

"Only till Thursday."

Charlie turned a little pale as he said it, and gnawed the yellow silk of his moustaches with a terrible anxiety at his heart. The gay young fellow, the fashionable butterfly of the F. O., knew little more of business than a child unborn; he only knew that, somehow or other, thanks to tailors, coryphées, wine, and whitebait, he had gone the pace too hard, and was now all down hill with the "traces broke."

"Humph! only forty-eight hours; close shave!" said Trevenna. "Of course you can't do anything, if you're not able to get the money. They've the law on their side."

Charlie looked at him a little wistfully. Men always confided in Trevenna, not certainly because he was *simpatico*, rather because, in the first place, he was always good natured and ready to give them his shrewd, clear, practical counsels, and again, because the quick resources of his adroit wits and the prompt energy of his temperament inspired them with instinctive confidence and hope.

"*Can't* you think of anything? You're such a clever fellow, Trevenna!" asked the embryo diplomatist, whose personal diplomacy was at its wits' end.

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"Thanks for the compliment, *bon garçon*, but I'm not clever enough to make money out of nothing; how people would rush to my laboratory, if I were! I should cut out all the pet preachers with the women. I really haven't an idea what advice to give you. I'd see these Tindall rascals with pleasure for you; but I don't suppose that would do any good."

"Try! there's a good fellow!" said the boy, with more eagerness than he had ever thrown into his sleepy silky voice in all the days of his dandyism. "Oh, by George! Trevenna, what a brick you'd be; they'd listen to you, you know, ten to one——"

Trevenna shook his head.

"I'm afraid not. A Jew hears no reason that don't satisfy his pocket. Still, I'll try what I can do. I'll ask them to let you have longer time, at any rate. Perhaps they'll be persuaded to renew the bills. Any way, I'm more up to City tricks than you are, Charlie. Let's see—what's their place of business? I remember—that wretched, dirty place in Piffler's-court, isn't it. I'll go down there to-morrow morning."

Charlie's languid eyes brightened with delighted hope, and he thanked his friend over and over again with all that cordial but embarrassed eagerness which characterises Young England when it is warmly touched and does not like to make a fool of itself. Charlie's heart was a very kind and a very honest

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one, under the shell of dandy apathy, and it held Trevenna from that moment in the closest gratitude.

"Such a brick of a fellow to go bothering himself into that beastly City after my affairs!" he thought, as he turned into Pratt's for a game of billiards, while Trevenna sauntered on down the shady side of the street.

"It's as well to oblige him; we should get nothing by putting the screw on him; he is only worth the tobacco-pots and art-trash he's heaped together in his rooms, and that chesnut hack that he's never paid for. It's as well to oblige him. Dal will kill himself, sooner or later at the rate he goes, and the next brother's an invalid; Charlie's sure to have the title, I fancy, some day or other," thought Trevenna, as he went along, encountering acquaintances at every yard, and receiving a dozen invitations to luncheon in as many feet of the trottoir. This was Trevenna's special statesmanship; to cast his nets so forward that they took in, not only the present, but the future. He sought the society and the friendship of young men: who knew what use they might not be some day?

Men thought him "a pushing fellow, but then so deucedly amusing!" and liked him. He was almost everywhere welcome to them; for he was not only a popular wit and a gossiper, but he was a surpassing whist and a capital billiard-player, an excellent shot, a splendid salmon-fisher, and as unerring a judge of all matters "horsy" as ever pronounced on a set of

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Rawcliffe yearlings, and picked out the winner from the cracks at Danebury. They thought him "nobody," and looked on him as only Chandos' protégé and *homme d'affaires;* but they liked him. Women alone never favoured him, and held him invariably at an icy distance, partly, of course, from the fact that women never smile upon a man who has nothing. Ladies are your only thorough Optimates. You like a man if he be a good shot, a good rider, a good talker; they must first know "all about him:" you laugh, if the wit be *ben trovato;* they must learn, before they smile, if the speaker be worth applauding: you will listen, if the brain be well filled; they must know that the purse is so also. Women, therefore, gave no sort of attention to Trevenna, but only spoke of him as "a little man—odious little man, so brusque; he keeps a cab, and lives no one knows how; hangs on to great men, and rich men, like Chandos."

Besides, Trevenna offended ladies in other ways. If not a great disciple of truth *in propriâ personâ*, he scattered a good many truths about in the world, though he lied with an enchanting readiness and tact when occasion needed. He, nevertheless, satirised hypocrisy and humbug with a genuine relish in the work; his natural candour relieved itself in the flagellations he gave humanity. He had a rich Hudibrastic vein in him, and he was not the less sincere in his ironies on the world's many masks, because his sagacity led him to borrow them to serve his own ends. Now Truth is

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a rough, honest, helter-skelter terrier that none like to see brought into their drawing-rooms, throwing over all their dainty little ornaments, upsetting their choicest Dresden that nobody guessed was cracked till it fell with the mended side uppermost, and keeping every one in incessant tremor lest the next snap should be at their braids or their boots, of which neither the varnish nor the luxuriance will stand rough usage. Trevenna took this unmuzzled brute about with him into precincts where there were delicacies a touch would soil, frailties a brush would crack, and smooth carpets of brilliant bloom and velvet gloss that, scratched up, showed the bare boards underneath, and let in the stench of rats rotting below. Of course, he and the terrier too were detested by ladies. Such a gaucherie would have been almost unbearable in a Duke! They would have had difficulty to control the grimace into a smile, had the coarse and cruel pastime been a Prince's; for a penniless man about town, it was scarcely likely they would open their boudoir doors to such a master and to such an animal. Women abominated him, and Trevenna was too shrewd to underrate the danger of his enemies. He knew that women make nine-tenths of all the mischief of this world, and that their delicate hands demolish the character and the success of any one whom they dislike; but to have given himself to conciliate them would have been a task of such infinite weariness to him, that he let things go as they would, and set himself to

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achieve what he purposed without reference to them. He was quite sure that if success shone on him the fair sex would smile too, and would soon find out that he was the most "delightful original in the world!"

"Chandos," said Trevenna, an hour or two later, taking his friend and patron aside for a second in one of the windows in White's (he was not a member there; even Chandos' influence could not as yet exclude three or four inevitable black balls to his name; but he dropped in now and then on the score of needing to see his friend: men could do under the shadow of Chandos' name or wish what they could never have done otherwise), "I want to tell you something. That young brother of Dallerstone's has come to grief, fallen in Jews' hands, got up a tree altogether. Dal can't help him; he's as bad himself; and they'll be down upon Charlie on Thursday."

"Poor boy! cannot we stop that?"

Chandos was watching the carriage beauties roll past, and was not heeding very much; but his natural impulse was to help anybody.

"Well, you could, of course; but it is asking a great deal of you. I have promised him to see Tindall's people."

"Who are they?"

"Jew firm in the City; hold a good many of your aristocratic friends in their teeth, too. But I was going to say, I can't do anything for him unless I take them some security that they will have their

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money. Now, if I could use your name, though there is no reason in life why you should give it——"

"My name? Oh, I will serve him, certainly, if he be in difficulties; he is a nice young fellow, Charlie. What is it you want done?"

"Merely your name to get the bills renewed. They'll trust that. They wouldn't take any more of Master Charlie's signatures, or of his dandy young F. O. friends of straw; but, if *you* back him up, I dare say I can get him a reprieve."

"Oh yes; I will do that. But I suppose his debts are not very great?—he is such a lad. Would it not be better to buy his paper out of these Hebrews' hands?"

"Mercy on us, monseigneur!" cried Trevenna. "If you don't talk as coolly of buying up any unknown quantity of bills as of buying a cigar-case! No; there is no necessity for doing anything of the kind. If you will just give your name to renew the acceptances, it will serve him admirably. Mind, this is entirely my idea—he don't dream of it; but I know you are always so willing to aid any one."

"I shall be most happy to do him any good, poor young fellow. You can have my signature when you like, though I think I might as well buy the bills at once; for most likely it will end in my paying the money," laughed Chandos, as he dropped his eye-glass and turned to shake hands with the Duke of Crown-diamonds. Trevenna's eyes smiled with self-contented

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amusement as he stood a moment watching the roll of the carriages down St. James's-street.

"That was a very good thought," he mused to himself. "I shall oblige Charlie—what an angel he will think me! and we shall get another of the Prince of Clarencieux's signatures into Tindall and Co.'s hands. Ah! there is nothing like combination and management."

"How does that man live, Ernest?" asked Cos Grenvil, as Trevenna drove from the doors of White's in his very dashing little tilbury.

"Live! my dear fellow, I don't know. What do you mean?"

"How does he get the money to keep that trap? The mare's worth five hundred guineas. He always vows he hasn't a sou."

"A man must drive something," said Chandos, who knew that the mare had come out of his own stables. "Trevenna always dines out, you know; and rooms in a quiet street cost nothing."

"Where was it you first met him?"

"I? At Baden, years and years ago."

"Ah!" yawned Grenvil, "plenty of scoundrels to be picked up there."

Chandos laughed.

"Thanks for the information, Cos. You are prejudiced against Trevenna. Don't believe all the nonsense he talks against himself: there is not a better fellow living."

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"'On aime mieux dire du mal de soi-même que de n'en point parler,'" murmured Grenvil. "I fancy that's your prime minister's reason for blackguarding himself so candidly. *I* don't like him! *Who* is he, by the way?"

"I am sure I can scarcely tell you. I believe his father was a Consul, and died abroad somewhere; so he told me, at the least. I never asked any more. I know he is an infinitely clever fellow; a thorough scholar too, though he never shows off his scholarship. Ah, there is the Lennox! How splendidly that woman wears; she must be thirty, but she is lovely as she was ten years ago."

"Beatrix? Yes. Berkeley considers himself *plus fin que tous les autres;* but even he says he's never thoroughly sure of being quite up to Tricksy Lennox."

"What a compliment she will deem it! She *is* dangerous, I suppose; her écarté is costly, but then—her eyes are so lovely! I always liked Mrs. Lennox; she is really perfect style, and besides——"

Chandos did not conclude his sentence as to his regard for the subject of it, but looked after her a moment. A lovely woman, as he had said, with hazel eyes and hair, and a half-disdainful, half-melancholy glance from under her drooping lids, who was driving a team of cream Circassian ponies. "*L'Empire c'est moi,*" was written in every line of her proud, classic features, Queen of the Free Lances as she was,

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daring and unscrupulous Bohemian as the world notoriously declared her.

Trevenna, farther down St. James's-street, arm in arm with a young M.P., who, having little brains of his own, was very glad to glean a few of the witty sayings and the sagacious notions of the man about town, saw Beatrix Lennox too, as her four creams dashed along like fiery little fanciful animals as they were.

"Confound that woman!" said the astute diplomatist to himself; but he took off his hat to her with his merriest, brightest, and most pleasant smile. "Rather a superfluous bit of ceremonious homage to Tricksy Lennox, eh?" he said to the young member, as he put his white hat on again.

Women had a just prévoyance, after all, in their dislike to Trevenna. Nobody on earth could more irretrievably blot and blast their reputations with a laugh.

"This note came for you, sir, during the morning," said Alexis, his head valet, as Chandos went into his chamber to dress for dinner at the French Embassy.

"Who brought it?"

"I really don't know who, sir; a commissionaire. He could not tell who the servant was that gave it him, but said he was to beg me to see it personally shown you," said Alexis, to whom the commissionaire had brought a considerable douceur to induce him to

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perform this office, all the letters that were sent to Chandos in unknown hands passing to his secretary.

He took it as he went into his dressing-room, and glanced at it indifferently. Like all well-known men, he received so many communications from strangers that he never looked at any letters save those he especially cared to open. We are all, more or less, martyrs to letters, and get a salutary dread of them as years roll onward. But this little note was so delicate, so perfumy, so pretty, and looked so like a love-missive, that Chandos for once broke both his rule and its seal. Little of love repaid him; the note was of most unfeminine brevity, though of thoroughly feminine mystery.

"CHANDOS,

"Believe in evil for once in your life, if you can. The man you took out of a debtors' prison hates you, if ever there were hate in this world. Under his bright good humour there lies a purpose very fatal to you. What purpose? I cannot tell you; watch, and you may unmask it. All I entreat of you is, be on your guard; and do not let your own heedless generosity, your own loyal and gallant faith, betray you into the hands of a traitor. Give no trust, give no friendship, to Trevenna: 'latet anguis in herbâ.'

"Your most sincere well-wisher."

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Chandos read the note, then crushed it up and flung it from him.

A certain chilliness had passed over him at the words that attacked in the dark the man whom he had so long trusted and befriended. Belief in it, even for a second, had not power to touch him. An anonymous note, of course, brought its own condemnation with it; but suspicion in any shape was so utterly alien and abhorrent to him, that its mere suggestion repelled him. Suspicion to frank and generous tempers is a cowardice, a treachery, a vile and creeping thing that dares not brave the daylight. The attack, the inuendo, the unauthenticated charge, only rallied him nearer him whom they impugned, not from obstinacy or from waywardness—his nature was too gentle to have a touch of either—but simply from the chivalry in his temperament that drew him to those who were slandered, and the loyalty in his friendship that clung closer to his friend when in need.

"Poor Trevenna! Some lady's vengeance, I suppose. If she were not too clever for any such folly, and too generous for any such slander, I should say the writing was Beatrix Lennox's; it is very like, though disguised," he thought, as he glanced at the note where it lay among the azure silk and laces of his curtains, where it had fallen.

It left a transient pain, impatience, and depression on him for ten minutes after its reception. To have read the mere suggestion of perfidy in the man he

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trusted made Chandos feel himself a traitor; and to his careless, insouciant, serenity-loving temper, any jar of a harsher world, any breath of doubt or of treachery, was as repellant to his mind as the east wind was to his senses.

He took his bath, of whose perfumes he was as fond as a Greek, dressed, and went to dinner at the French Embassy, and thence to the succession of entertainments and pleasures that awaited him, closing the night at four o'clock in the morning over the gay *souper à huis clos* of that new Adrienne Lecouvreur, Claire Rahel; and throughout the night he did not think once of the little note that lay hidden among the silk folds of the curtains, crumpled and forgotten, vain and useless, as most warnings are, and as, certainly, anonymous warnings deserve to be, however good their intention.

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CHAPTER VIII.

A JESTER WHO HATED BOTH PRINCE AND PALACE.

"LADY CHESTERTON is vowing Cherubino is divine. What queer divinity! What would Michael Angelo have said to an Archangel in a tail-coat, a lace cravat, and a pair of white kid gloves, holding a roll of music, and looking a cross between a brigand, a waiter, and a parson?" said Trevenna, to the Comtesse de la Vivarol. Madame de la Vivarol was the only woman who in any way countenanced and liked Trevenna, the only one of the *grandes dames* of the exclusive leaders of ton who ever deigned to notice his existence; and she was amused by his impudence, his sang froid, and his oddity, and paid him only just as much attention as Montespan and other great ladies of Versailles paid their Barbary monkey or their little negro dwarf, according the pet liberties because of its strangeness and its insignificance.

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"Droll life, a public singer's!" went on Trevenna, who could not keep his tongue quiet, even through a morning concert, and who, moreover, hated music heartily, and could not have told "Mose in Egitto" from "Yankee Doodle." "Subsists on his clavicle, and keeps his bank balance in his thorax; knows his funds will go down if he hatches up a sore-throat, and loses all his capital if he catches a cough; lunches off cutlets and claret to come and sing 'The moon rides high,' in broad daylight; and cries 'Io son ricco e tu sei bella,' while he's wondering how he shall pay his debts, and thinking what an ugly woman the singer with him in the duo is. Ah, by-the-by, madame, apropos of plain women—the Marchesa di Santiago has given some superb malachite candelabra as a votive offering to Moorfields, for the same reason, they *do* say, as the Princesse de Soubise gave gold lamps to Bossuet, 'pour le pouvoir de pêcher à l'ame tranquille.'"

"Chut! I detest scandal," smiled Madame de la Vivarol; "and license has its limits, M. Trevenna. Madame di Santiago is my most particular friend."

"Exactly: of your enemy, madame, I know a detrimental story would not be half so piquant! To hear ill of our foes is the salt of life; but to hear ill of our friends is the sauce blanche itself," responded Trevenna the Imperturbable.

The Countess laughed, and gave him a dainty blow with her satin programme.

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"Most impudent of men! When will you learn the first lesson of society, and decently and discreetly *apprendre à vous effacer?*"

"*A m'effacer?* The advice Lady Harriet Vandeleur gave Cecil. Very good for mediocre people, I dare say; but it wouldn't suit *me.* There are some people, you know, that won't iron down for the hardest rollers. *M'effacer?* No! I'd rather any day be an ill-bred originality than a well-bred nonentity."

"Then you succeed perfectly in being what you wish! Don't you know, monsieur, that to set yourself against conventionalities is like talking too loud?—an impertinence and an under-breeding that society resents by exclusion."

"Yes, I know it. But a Duke may bawl, and nobody shuts out *him;* a Prince might hop on one leg, and everybody would begin to hop too. Now what the ducal lungs and the princely legs might do with impunity, I declare I've a right to do, if I like."

"*Bécasse!*" said madame; "no one can declare his rights till he can do much more, and—purchase them. Have a million, and we may perhaps give you a little license to be unlike other persons; without the million, it is an ill-bred gaucherie."

"Ah, I know! Only a nobleman may be original; a poor penniless wretch upon town must be humbly and insignificantly common-place. What a pity for the success of the aristocratic monopolists that Nature

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puts clever fellows and fools just in the reverse order But then Nature's a shocking Socialist."

"And so are you."

Trevenna laughed.

"Hush, madame. Pray don't destroy me with such a whisper."

"And be silent yourself," said Madame la Comtesse. "You are the most incorrigible chatterer out of a monkey-house; and one cannot silence *you* with a few nuts to crack, for the only thing you relish is mischief. Chut! I want to hear the concerto."

"*Apprendre à m'effacer*," meditated Trevenna; "life has wanted to teach me that lesson ever since I opened my eyes to it. 'Fall in with the ruck; never think of winning the race; never dare to start for the gold cups, or enter yourself for the aristocratic stakes; plod on between the cart-shafts; toil over the beaten tracks; let them beat you, and gall you, and tear your mouth with the curb, and never turn against them; but, though you hate your existence with all your might and main, bless the Lord for your creation, preservation, and salvation.' That was the lesson they tried to teach me. I said, I'd be shot if I'd learn it; all the teachers and lawgivers couldn't force it down *my* throat. I am a rank outsider; nobody knows my stable or my trainer, my sire or my dam; nobody would bet a tenner on my chances. N'importe! a rank outsider has carried the Derby away from the favourite before now."

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With which consolatory metaphor of the Turf, Trevenna leant back to Lady Chesterton with as familiar a *sans façon* as though he were the Duke of Crowndiamonds.

"Pretty landscape, that Hobbema? Nothing but a hovel among birch-trees. Why on earth is a tumble-down cottage so much prettier on canvas than a marble mansion? One likes crooked lines better than straight ones, I suppose, in art and out of it. Humanity has a natural weakness for the zigzag."

Lady Chesterton made him a distant bow, and a stare of such unutterable insolence as only a great lady can command.

"That insufferable person! Such an odious *ton de garnison!* I cannot think how Chandos can countenance him," said her ladyship, without deigning to murmur any lower than usual, to the Marchioness of Sangroyal beside her.

The concert at which Trevenna was solacing himself for the martyrdom of melody by watching with his bright eyes for waifs and strays, for hints and grounds of future scandalous and entertaining historiettes, was one of the musical mornings for which the house in Park-lane was famous—concerts of the choicest, under the organisation of Guido Lulli, most delicate, most masterly of musical geniuses, with the répertoire as full of artistic light and shade as any Titian, and the performance, by the first singers of Europe, just sufficiently, and only sufficiently, long to

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charm without ever detaining the ear. These concerts were invariably in the picture-galleries; so that while the glories of Gluck, and Handel, and Rossini, and Meyerbeer floated on the air, the companion-art was always before the eyes of the audience, while beyond, aisle upon aisle of colour and blossom opened from the conservatories. The softest of south winds blew gently in now from the paradise of flowers glowing there; the sunlight fell on to some deep-hued Giorgone, some historical gathering of Veronese, or some fair martyr-head of Delaroche; the dilettanti murmured praise of a fugue in D or a violin obligato; the gold-corniced, purple-hung shadowy gallery was filled with a maze of bright hues and perfumy laces and the fair faces of women; and Chandos, lying back in his fauteuil near an open window, listened dreamily to the harmonies of Beethoven, and let his eyes dwell on the Queen of Lilies.

In the high-pressure whirl and incessant amusement of his life, it was difficult for any one impression to be made so indelibly upon him that it could not be chased away and surpassed by fifty others as fascinating; but, as far as he could be haunted by one exclusive thought, that thought, since the night of his ball, had been the young Lily-Queen.

> "In many mortal forms I rashly sought
> The shadow of that idol of my thought!"

he mused to himself, with a smile. "Have I found it at last, I wonder? Surely."

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He did not think that to seek it here might be to the full as rash, and to the full as vain, as any other phantom-search that had before beguiled him. Who ever does think so in the first sweetness of the aërial vision?

The moment when he had seen her as Lucrèce had been fatal to him; he had from that moment lost the power of judging or of reading her with truth and calmness; for from that moment she had become the mortal form of his ideal among women. The shell was so perfect; he never doubted that the pearl within was as fair.

His glance met hers now as he sat beside her just within the shade of one of the purple curtains, where she was framed in a setting of South American flowers, with one faint tint of the sunlight straying, rose-hued and mellow, across them and her.

The softness of a beautiful warmth passed over her face as she met his glance, wavering, delicate, the flush of unconscious love and half-startled pleasure; he did not ask if it were but from the rays of the sun, or if it were but from the rays of a sun brighter and more precious to us than the sun of the heavens—that God of Light we call Gratified Vanity.

He bent to her with an almost caressing homage, though he only spoke common-place words.

"I had the whole selection classical music to-day, Lady Valencia. I remembered you had said Mendelssohn was your favourite master."

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She smiled, a sweet, glad smile, full of pleased surprise.

"You remembered my idle words?"

"No words can be idle to me that you have spoken."

No one heard the answer as the serene, sublime harmonies of the great Israelite floated through the air, and he leaned forward towards her chair, thinking how like to one another were the pure music that thrilled his ear, and the proud yet soft loveliness that charmed his heart. It was his way to say gentle things to all women, and to mean them indeed while he uttered them; but here he meant them more deeply than in the mere gallantries of a courtly society.

She looked at him almost shyly under the shadow of her long eyelashes. The touch of shyness that was on her with him lent a subtler, sweeter beguilement to the young patrician; so tranquil in her power commonly, so haughty in her delicate disdain to all others who ever sought her.

"You will make me bold enough," she said, with a smile, "to venture to ask you a favour that I have been hopelessly meditating for the last half-hour."

"It is granted unasked. And now——?"

"And now—how strange you will think it."

"Have no fear of that. If I can please you in anything, I shall be honoured enough. Your wish is——?"

"Well!" she answered, with a low laugh that

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scarcely disturbed, or was told from, the music, it was so like it in sweetness, "I want you to show me the room where "Lucrèce" was written. You do not let the world in there, they tell me; but I fancy you will not refuse me my entreaty to enter the sacred precincts."

"Who could refuse you anything?" he asked her in turn. "Where I wrote "Lucrèce" was chiefly in the East; but I will gladly let you honour my sanctum, though the thoughts that have been sufficient for me there will scarcely be so any longer when once you have left the memory of your presence to haunt it."

They spoke no more, as the richest melody of the selection rolled in all its grandeur down the air, bearing with it all the life and soul of the Provençale musician. To those who were gathered here—save to Chandos indeed, who, never heard a perfect rhythm of harmony but that he glided on its chords through dreamy Shelley fancies—the music was but a pastime of the hour, a fashionable distraction to amuse a languid moment, a cover to flirtation; but to Lulli it was the very breath of existence. Shrinking from every strange glance and voice, and shunning all publicity as he did at all other times, he was now—now that he was absorbed in his art—as sublimely unconscious of the gaze or presence of that aristocratic and indifferent crowd as though they were peasant-children listening to his notes. He was as insensible to them as though they had no existence. What were they

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to him; those cold dilettanti; those airy coquettes; those critical dandies; those beautiful idiots, who talked art-jargon without a throb of art within their souls? Nothing. They had no part nor share with him. He lived in the world he created, he lived in the heaven of melody that was around him; and any other world was forgotten. And in that oblivion the man grew grand, the timid, suffering, helpless cripple became a king in his own right, a sovereign in his own domain—an empire that lay far away from the fret and fume of men, far away from the unworthiness of life. His head was proudly borne; his haggard cheek was bright with the youth that, save in dreams, he had never known; his eyes were alit with the blaze of the south and the light of the conqueror;—and those among the guests who thought to notice this lame creature with the heart of a Beethoven, would put up their glasses and give him a curious look as though he were a medium or a piece of china, and say to each other, to forget it the next moment,

"That poor mad cripple—quite a genius! Odd fancy of Chandos to keep him, but certainly he conducts wonderfully well."

Ah me! Socrates was poisoned, and Gracchus and Drusus slaughtered, and Hildebrand driven to die in exile, and Dante banished, and Shakspeare unknown by his generation, and Spenser killed for lack of bread, and Cervantes left to rot in a debt-prison, and Keats assassinated with neglect, and we are none

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the wiser. We know what is amongst us no better for it all.

> And all at once they leave you, and you know them;
> We are so fool'd, so cheated.

Yes; so fooled because we are blind in our own conceit, and gather no collyrium from the past.

"What a beautiful place!" cried the Queen of Lilies, as she entered, at the close of the concert, that room which simply a desire to be able to command perfect solitude, if he desired it, had made him deny to all guests, and even to all servants unsummoned—a natural wish enough, which had, as is usual, excited a myriad of vague and utterly irreconcilable, contradictory rumours as to its uses. Even Lady Valencia was a little disappointed to find that there was no mystery whatever in this closed Eleusinian temple, but merely that grace and refinement of beauty and of artistic colour which Chandos, without effeminacy, demanded as the summum bonum of life, and insisted on, like the Greeks, in the shape and habit of every commonest household thing.

"Too beautiful to dedicate to solitude," she said, as he led her in with words of complimentary welcome. "How connoisseurs would envy all the Coustous and Canovas, all the pictures and bronzes buried in this single room! Why, your very choicest art-treasures are hidden here!"

He smiled.

"I believe they are. But the envy of the virtuosi

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would not enhance their beauty or my pleasure in it."

"No?" She did not understand him. To her a diamond was no more worth than a stone, unless it were seen and coveted of others. "This room is like a vision of Vathek. No wonder they call you a Sybarite!"

He laughed.

"Do they call me so? And yet I would have rather lived on a date in Pericles' Athens than have been king in Sybaris. Ah! I told you it was cruel kindness to come here, Lady Valencia; my Daphne will have no smile, and my Danaë no bloom, any longer. My art-idols will have no charm beside one memory."

He looked down on her with a glance that made his words no empty flattery as they stood beside a writing-cabinet that had belonged to Tullia d'Arragona. She laid her hand on the manuscripts and papers that strewed it, and laughed, half gaily, half mournfully, as she touched them.

"But those papers contain what no woman will rival. An author always has one sovereign that no one can dethrone—in his own dreams."

She must have known that it would have been hard for even a poet's imagining to conjure any fancy more fair than her own reality, where she stood leaning slightly down over the old ebony and gold cabinet of Strozzi's mistress, alone with the art which had no other story to tell than the love it em-

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bodied, no other thought to create than the eternal history of human passion—alone with the golden, lingering light of the sunset playing about her feet and shining in the deep brown lustre of her glance.

He stooped towards her, made captive without reflection, without heed.

"But doubly happy the author who finds his fairest dream made real! The sovereign of the fancy must yield her sceptre when her very smile is found in the living sovereign of the heart."

It was almost a love-declaration.

At that moment, through the open doorway floated Madame de la Vivarol; her pretty chimes of laughter softly ringing on the ear; her trailing, silken skirts followed by Cos Grenvil and the Duke of Crown-diamonds.

"Ah, monsieur! so you have thrown this sacred and mystical chamber open at last to profane feet. How charming it is; like a piece of description out of *Monte Christo!*" she cried, with charming carelessness, as she fluttered, butterfly-like, about the room, criticising a tazza, glancing at a manuscript, admiring a miniature, trying an ivory pistol, commenting on a statuette. "So this is your solitude!" she went on, remorselessly (while none but he caught one swift glance that meant, "You desert me—allons! you shall regret it!"). "Really, mon ami, it is more agreeable than most men's entertainments. We shall know now how pleasant your retreat is when you are occu-

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pied—in solitude—with your *paperasses* and your palette!"

"Ah, madame!" said Chandos, laughingly, though he knew very well what was concealed under that airy challenge, "fair memories will be left to my room, but its spell and its peace will be broken for ever. As I was saying to Lady Valencia, I can never summon shapes to paper or canvas now that its loneliness will be haunted with such recollections."

"Mon ami," said La Vivarol, with the prettiest mocking grace in the world, "are you so very constant to the absent?"

And while she floated hither and thither, fluttering over a *Vita Nuova*, rich in Attavante miniatures, lifting her eye-glass at a little Wouvermans, murmuring, "Que c'est joli! que c'est joli!" before a grand scene of David, and slightly shrugging her shoulders at a bewitching Greuze, because it was a different style of beauty to her own, none could have dreamed that madame had a trace of pique on her. Yet, as they left for their carriages a few moments later, it would have been hard to say which had the most bitter pang against her rival treasured in silence, the fair Lily-Queen, who had lost the one moment when warm words had so nearly been won on his lips, or the French Countess, who had found another given the entrance to that writing-room to which admittance had been so often, and so steadily though gaily, denied her.

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As for Chandos, he consoled himself easily with the happy insouciance of his nature, and went down to dine at his "bonbonnière" at Richmond. Among his party was Beatrix Lennox, a clever woman and a brilliant—a woman with the talent of a Chevreuse and the fascination of a Lenclos; a woman whose wit was never weary, and whose voice charmed like the sound of a flute through a still, aromatic, tropical night; a woman in whose splendid eyes there came now and then, when she ceased to speak, a look of unutterable pain—a look that passed very quickly, too quickly to be ever seen by those around her.

Chandos, amused by those nearest to him, who laid themselves out to so amuse him with all the brightness of their ready esprit, all the gaiety of their airy laughter, all the infectious mirth of their vivacious chansons, was too well distracted to notice or perceive that Trevenna studiously, though with all his customary tact, prevented any opportunity occurring for Mrs. Lennox to approach her host, or be able to address him in any way apart. He did not notice either, though she was a favourite with him, that the haughty, resistless, victorious *lionne*, usually so disdainful and so despotic in her imperious grace, allowed Trevenna to use an almost insolent off-hand brusquerie to her unreproved, and once or twice took the cue of her words from him, and obeyed his glance as a proud forest-born deer, tamed by captivity, might obey the hand of its keeper, compulsorily but rebelliously.

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Chandos had the too ready trustfulness of a woman; but he had nothing of that subtle power at the perception of trifles, and the clairvoyant divination of their meaning, which atone to women for the risks of their over-faith.

The world amused him so well, what need had he to probe beneath its surface, or ask its complex springs? That work was Trevenna's business, and to Trevenna's taste. As a boy, that alert humorist had never seen a conjuror's legerdemain but to buy the trick of it, a piece of machinery but to investigate its principle, a stage but to go behind the scenes, a watch but to break it in trying to find out its manufacture; he did the same now with human life. All its weaknesses, all its crimes, all its secrets, all its intricacies, and conspiracies, and veiled motives, and plausible pretexts, it was his delight to pierce, and learn, and uncover, and hold in abject subjection. To walk, as it were, in the underground sewers of the moral nature, and to watch all the wheels within wheels of the world's rotation, was an exquisite amusement to Trevenna. Nor did he ever get cynical with it. He thought very badly of humanity, to be sure; but it tickled his fancy that men should be such rascals as he thought them; it never for an instant made him sour at it. He was, as Chandos had said, an odd mixture of Theophrastic bitterness and Plautus-like good humour. He never condemned anything; he only found everything out. He had not the slightest

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objection that men should be scoundrels; on the whole, it was more convenient that they should be so; all he cared was that he should be up to their moves.

Nor was it a brief or a light labour by which he became so. A marvellously unerring memory, an acumen of the finest intelligence, an universality that could adapt itself pliably to all forms, a penetration that never erred, a logic that could never be betrayed into the *ignoratio elenchi*, and, above all, a light, off-hand, perfect tact that could successfully cover all these from view, were the severe acquirements that were necessities for his success; and by a perseverance as intense as ever scholar brought to his science, or warrior to his struggle, he had gained them in such proportion at least as any man can ever hope to attain them all. There was strong stuff, there was great stuff, in the man who could put himself voluntarily through such a course of training as Trevenna had now pursued through long years; to the world's view of him, an adventurer, an idler, a 'diner-out, a hanger-on to men of rank and riches, in real truth a man whom not one trifle of the passing hour escaped, by whom the slightest thread that might be useful in the future was never neglected, and who, after pleasures and affronts in turn, that would have alternately enervated and heart-sickened any other less sturdily in earnest than himself, could come back to his cheap lodgings to plunge into intellectual labour

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and to grind political knowledge as arduously and as steadily as though he were a lad studying for his Greats at an university.

The qualities he brought to his career were admirable beyond all average of ordinary power; the purpose of his career was more questionable. He would have said, and so far with fair justice, that it was, at any rate, the same which sent Alexander into the heart of the East, which placed Mahomet at the head of the wondrous legions of El-Islam, which sent William of Orange to the throne of Great Britain, and the young Corsican to the dais and diadem of Louis Quatorze—the motive of self-aggrandisement. And, in truth, there was in this good-humoured, impudent, imperturbable, brusque, amusing man about town, who jested to get a dinner, and put up with slights to purchase a day's shooting, the same element of indomitability as there was in Cæsar, the same power of concentration as there was in Columbus, and the same strength of self-training as there was in Julian. Only his Rome was the House of Commons, his Terra Nuova was the table-land where adventurers were denied to mount, and his deities were Money, Success, and Vengeance—gods, it must be confessed, in all ages fair to men as Venus Pandemos, and more potent with them than all the creeds from Cybèle's to Chrysostom's.

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BOOK THE SECOND.

O ye gods! what a number
Of men eat Timon, and he sees them not!

SHAKSPEARE.

O Jealousy! thou most unnatural offspring
Of a too tender parent, that in excess
Of fondness feeds thee like the pelican,
But with her purest blood; and in return
Thou tear'st the bosom whence thy nurture flows.

FROUDE.

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CHAPTER I.

UNDER THE WATERS OF NILE.

It was night in the low, crooked, dirty, unsavoury court in which stood the little rickety door, with its yellow panes of opaque glass, that was lettered Tindall and Co. An unpretentious place, untempting, dusty, and boasting in no way of itself; its shop or counting-house (for it was a cross between the two) suggestive of no particular trade, but chiefly filled with a few old pictures, a few old blackened bronzes, a piece or two of quaint armour, a violin *dit de* Stradivarius, a little china, and much lumber. These things, however, remained there week after week; it was not in them that Tindall and Co. dealt, and they were too straightforward, too affluent people to care to palm these broken antiquities and mock *virtù* off upon their clients; that was not their way of doing business at

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all. The brown pictures, the cracked china, the old pair of Modenese carvings, the helmet, or the fiddle, were only trifles on the surface, immaterial garnishings to answer the curious eyes of the multitude when those eyes, in passing, peered in and wondered what was traded in behind the opaque panes of glass. Underneath them, as the crocodile sits hidden, with the sullen reddish waters, and the broad fan-like leaves of the Nile above his scaly head and opened jaws, so might be said to sit Tindall and Co., eating all manner of strange things that dropped between their fangs; youth and age, broad estates and ancient halls, wooded acres and gallant names, boyhood with the gold on its hair, and manhood with the shot of the suicide through its heart, eating them all, and mashing them together impartially, and churning them all down without distinction into one vast, even, impotent, shapeless mass of ruin.

This was what Tindall and Co. did under the flowing mud-hued Nile-tide of London life, and then lay basking, alligator-like, waiting for more. This is what Tindall and Co., and such-like spawn of Nile, can do under the beneficent laws, which, by restricting usury with a penalty, compel despair to pay double for the straw it grasps at—laws which forget that, despite them all, the supply will always continue to meet the demand, and that their only issue is to make the one who supplies insist on treble payment as indemnity for the risks he runs through them. Ah! wise, calm voice

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of Political Economy, will it ever be heard? will its true justice ever outweigh the gushing impulses of cruel sentiment? will it ever be known that its immutable impartiality is as truly gentle as the world at present calls it hard? When it shall be, the crocodiles will be crushed in turn, and crocodile-tears flow no more; but the millennium is very far away.

The premises of Tindall and Co. were cut up into various small rooms; privacy was an essential of their pursuits. It would warn away the antelope that steals down to the treacherous edge to slake its thirst, within fatal distance of the alligator's jaws, if it were to see signs of the bones and skin of a lately devoured brother lying near. They were all dingy, dull, smoke-dried little chambers, with a musty, repellent odour that involuntarily brought remembrance of the Morgue. In one of them to-night, the poorest of the lot, which bore traces of constant occupation in its poor furniture, was the old Castilian Jew standing in the tawny light of a hand-lamp burning near him, whose yellow gleam flickered over his long black garments, his snow-white patriarchal beard, and his cap, like the round cap of a Rubens picture, of worn dark velvet, scarce darker than his olive brow, with the straight line of the eyebrows, and the piercing eyes, whose lustre even age could not dim. Before him, in the shadow, was a young boy, a boy at most of seventeen or eighteen years, beautiful as a Murillo head, with the rich red lips, the black, long, tender

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eyes, the falling silken locks of a Spanish picture, and the appealing softness of an extreme youth blent in him with the fixed misery of a shameful grief. There were heavy tears on his dropped lashes, and his lips were slightly apart like those of one who is worn out and faint with pain. Between the two stood Trevenna, with his bright, open, pleasant face and his shrewd blue English eyes, dressed for the evening, with the lamplight falling on the polish of his Paris boots and the laced ends of his necktie, as he leaned in comfortable indifference, like one who is master of the house and master of the situation, against the wooden ledge of the painted mantelpiece.

"Much more sensible to come back, little Benjamin!" he said, with a shrug of his shoulders. "Never try dodging with *me;* it isn't the least bit of use. Only riles me, as the Yankees say, and can't serve you in the slightest. Bless your heart, my little felon, do you suppose if you were to hide yourself in the African sands, or bury yourself in the Arctic ice, *I* shouldn't ferret you out when I wanted you?"

His laughing merry eyes flashed a single glance into the lad's drooped face; and the boy shuddered and trembled, and turned pale as though he were an accused between the irons, wrenched with another turn of the rack.

"Not the smallest use in dodging," pursued Tre-

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venna, as good naturedly and agreeably as though he offered him a glass of sherry. "Shows great inexperience to try it. World's made up of flies and spiders; you're a fly, and all the world's a net for you; glide through one web, another'll catch you. Listen; you'd better understand it once for all. Do what you like with yourself, go where you like, burn yourself up in the tropics, bury yourself down in the mines, grow old, marry, grow grey, get children, make money; but don't think to escape *me*. When I want you, or when you forfeit leniency, I shall have you. Just think! twenty years hence perhaps you may be fancying the thing blown over, you may be living in luxury even—who knows?—yonder there among your precious Spanish vines; you may be in love and have some soft Andalusian for your wife; you may have friends who think you a mirror of probity, brats who will own your name, all sorts of stakes in life, all sorts of ties to it; and just then, if I want you—Presto! I shall be down upon you. So never feel sure, that's all; and never try dodging."

He watched the boy as he spoke, winding up all these fancies, so foreign to his natural speech, that he might turn with each one of them another grind of the rack to the soft and helpless nature before him. It amused him to see the agony they caused. The boy shrank farther and farther, like a hunted, stricken creature, trembling and paralysed, his eyes fascinated on his tormentor as though by a spell.

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The old man stood mute and motionless, but an anguish greater even than the youth's was on him in his silence; and, as his eyes turned with piteous entreaty, his dry lips murmured unconsciously:

"Sir, sir! as you are merciful!—he is so young."

"Precisely because he *is* so young, my good Ignatius, must we have him know that, live as long as he may, he'll never be free," retorted Trevenna, pleasantly. "He has a long life before him, and he might get fancying that all this would wear out; but it won't. Paper isn't sand, and that little document of his will always stand."

The boy, Agostino, as he was called, the only living thing of the old man's blood and name, looked up with a low, gasping cry. This merciless seizure of all his future, this damning denial of all earthly hope, this chain that wound about all years to come ere yet they had dawned on him, this despairing eternity of bondage, were greater than he could bear. He threw up his arms with a passionate moan, and flung himself at Trevenna's feet, his bright brow bent down on the dust, his hands clasping the hem of his tyrant's coat.

"Kill me! O God of Israel! kill me at one blow. I cannot live like this."

Trevenna moved his foot a little, as though he pushed away a whining spaniel, and laughed as he looked down on him.

"Cher Agostino, you would make a capital actor.

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I think I'll put you on the stage; you'd be a first-rate *Romeo*, or *Ion*."

The kick, the laugh, the words, in the moment of his intense torture, stung and lashed the submissive spirit of the Israelite race, and the terror-stricken bondage of the boy, into a passionate life that broke all bonds. He sprang to his feet, standing there where the tawny circle of the oil-light fell, like a young David, his rich lips quivering, his curls flung back, his cheek with its glowing Murillo tint deepened to a scarlet fire.

"What have I done?" he cried aloud, while his voice rang piteously through the chamber. "What have I done to be tortured like this? Not a tithe of what is done here every day, every hour! If I *be* a thief, where is the wonder? Is there not robbery round me from noon to night? Is not every breath of air in this accursed den charged with some lie, some theft, some black iniquity? Hundreds come here in their ruin; is one ever spared? Is not a trade in men's necessities driven here from year's end to year's end? Is not poverty betrayed, and ignorance tempted, and honour bought and sold here every week? How could I learn honesty where all is fraud and sin? how could I keep stainless where everything is corruption? If I am a thief and a felon, what are *you?*"

The bold words poured out in anguish, their English speech tinged and mellowed with the Cas-

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tilian accent. Suffering had made him desperate; he writhed and turned and struck his bondmaster. The old man heard him, trembling and aghast; his brown face blanched, his teeth shook; he looked up at Trevenna with a piteous supplication.

"Oh, sir! oh, my master, forgive him! He is but a child, and he knows not what he says——"

"He will know what he has to pay for it. Out of my way, you young hound."

The answer was not even angered, not even jarred from his customary bantering bonhomie; but at the glance of the keen blue eye that accompanied it, all the sudden fire, all the momentary rebellion, of the boy died out; he felt his own utter powerlessness against the master he contended with; he cowered like a beaten dog, dropped his head on his breast, and burst into a passion of tears.

"Shut up that," said Trevenna, carelessly, while, as much unmoved as though the young Jew's fiery words had never scathed his ear, he took out some papers from his inner coat-pocket and tossed them to Ignatius Mathias. "Here, look alive. Take these; and don't do anything to little Dallerstone yet a while. If he come here, mind he don't know anything about those signatures; let him understand that, quite as a matter of kindness, I looked in to see if you could be induced to take the screw off him; let him think that I'd infinite trouble to get you to do anything of the kind; and leave him to feel that you'll very

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likely be down on him, and that his only safety's in me. Look sharp; you understand?"

The Hebrew bent his head, holding the papers in his withered hands; they were the bills of young Charlie Dallerstone, freshly renewed on Chandos' acceptation.

"One thing more," went on Trevenna, looking at his watch; for he was going to dine in Park-lane, and it was nearly nine. "I find Sir Philip looks booked to make a very sure thing at the Ducal. His French horse is sure to win, and he may strike a vein of luck again. Catch him while he's down; call in his 'stiff' to-morrow. He must sell up; he can't help himself. As for Lady Vantyre—one don't deal with women usually; but she's been going it very fast in Venezuelan bonds and Californian scrip. She wants some ready, and she's quite safe; she'll come into no end of money by-and-by. I buy and sell for her in the City, so I know to a T what she's worth. That's all, I think; you may come to me the day after to-morrow, if you've anything to say. Good-bye, young one, and just remember, if you don't want to see the hulks,—don't dodge!"

With which valediction, Trevenna sauntered out of the room, drawing on his gloves, to get into his night cab and drive to one of those charming dinners of princes, peers, wits, authors, and artists, all chosen for some social gift of brilliance, for which the house of Chandos was celebrated.

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"What an angel Charlie will think me!" thought Trevenna, with a laugh, as his dashing cab clattered his way from Tindall and Co.'s, where he had stopped openly and left his thorough-bred high stepper to dance impatiently before the door in full view of any passer-by. He only went on Charlie's business.

Those whom he had left in the little, close, and ill-illumined chamber were silent many moments. That laughing, frank, clever face of their tyrant had left a shadow there dark as night. The two forms were in strange contrast with the meagre commonplace of their surroundings—two figures of Giorgone and of Rubens painted in upon the drab-hued dusty panels of the miserable City office-room. The youth Agostino sat motionless, his head bowed down upon his arms. The old man watched him, his eyes, with all the yearning tenderness of a woman in them, filling with the slow, salt tears of age. He was a hard man, a cunning man, maybe, a man chilled by a long life of opprobrium, of struggle, of persecution, of pain; but he was soft in his heart as a mother to that beautiful lad, the last flower of a doomed and died-out house. He loved him with a great love, this only living son of his young dead wife; this Benoni, who had come to him, as it seemed, with all the perfume and the poetry of his lost Spain shed on his vivid beauty, and seeming to revive in his happy grace.

Therefore, in his sin he had clung to him, in his

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shame he had no reproach to deal him; and through him, for him, by him, the grand old Israelite became weak as water, facile as a reed in the hands of an inexorable task-master, who was exacting as an Egyptian of old.

He laid his hand on the boy's bowed head and moved the thick curls tenderly.

"You were too rash, my Agostino; it is not for the helpless to incense the strong. I trembled as I heard—my child, my child, your sole hope is in his sparing you."

Agostino lifted his head, the tears heavy on his lids, his lips swollen and parted.

"Forgive me, father, I was mad! And I only said the truth to him, though the God of Truth is my witness that I had no thought to wound *you*, or to mean *you* by my words. If what I see here is evil, what I learn from you is good; so lofty that it should outweigh it a thousand-fold. My guilt is my own; I meant no reproach to you."

"I know, I know," said the old man, wearily. "But you angered him, my child; I saw it by his eye, and—and—we are in his power. He has been good to us—good to us. We are bound to bear the stripes that he may deal."

It was said patiently, firmly, and in sincerity. Trevenna had bought his invaluable tool by a few arts which were on the surface benevolent and lenient, and were, in literal fact, far-sighted plans to purchase

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a fine instrument at a small price. But the perception of this, even where it dawned on him, did not avail to shake the old Israelite's sense of grateful bondage; nor would it have done so even had it not been accompanied with the auxiliaries of necessity and fear which, through Agostino, he was moved by as well.

"Good!" the youth's eyes flashed, and his mouth quivered. "I would to Heaven, but for the shame on you, that he would give me up to justice, and send me out to any fate, rather than force me to live in this yoke an hour longer. It kills me, it kills me! Under his eye I have no will; under his law my very breath seems his. What is it to be *spared*, to be dogged by such a doom as he told out to me?—a never-ending dread!"

The old man shuddered, and on his face there deepened that terrible hunted look of fear for one dearer than himself, which had gleamed from the light of his sunken eyes throughout Trevenna's presence.

"Agostino! the life of a convict for *you!* The irons on your young limbs, the brutal work for your delicate strength, the captivity, the travail, the shame, the misery——"

His voice failed him; he could not think of the near approach of such a doom for the only thing left to him on earth without his anguish mastering him. Agostino trembled and shrank back, crouch-

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ing, bowed, and prostrate, in the same paralysis of horror which had subdued him when Trevenna had spoken. He could not have faced his fate. There was on the Spanish splendour of his boyish loveliness a wavering, womanish weakness, a cowardice, the result not of selfishness, but of changing and painful sensitiveness; it was this instability, this cowardice, which had drawn him into a crime wholly at variance with the candid tenderness of his regard, and which made him, through his fear, ductile as wax to mould even into the very thing he loathed. He might say that he longed for justice in the stead of being spared by one who played with him in his suffering as a cat with a bird; but he would have clung to exemption at all cost had he been put really to the test, and accepted life on any terms to escape the horror and the ignominy of public retribution.

The old Israelite looked down on him, and as he saw that pitiful, tremulous abasement before the mere conjured vision of a felon's life, lifted his withered hands upward in a grand, unconscious gesture of imprecation and of prayer.

"May the God of Israel forsake me in my last extremity, if I ever forsake him by whom you have been spared your doom!"

The vow was uttered in all the dignity and in all the simplicity of truth. No matter what his taskmaster might be to others, no matter how cruel the tasks he set, no matter how hard the lashes he gave,

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no matter how weary the labour he imposed, to Ignatius Mathias he was sacred; he had spared Agostino.

In that moment of his oath of fidelity, the Castilian Jew, the white-haired usurer, the world-worn toiler in many cities, the despised and reviled Hebrew, reached a moral height of which John Trevenna never had a glimpse.

He paused awhile, gazing down upon the boy. For many weeks they had been parted, for the first time in their lives, and severed in the tortures of suspense; and the sight of him, even in their present anguish, even in the bitterness of the guilt which had stained this opening life with its blot, was sweet as water in a dry land to the sear and aching heart of the old man. With his own hands he brought him wine and bread, and bade him eat, breaking through all the custom and ceremonies of his people, and tending him with woman-like gentleness. It was thus that he had made Agostino dependent and fragile as a girl, and powerless to guide himself through the rough winds and subtle temptations of the world. Amidst the deprivation and misery that had fallen to the lot of the Israelite, the child who had the eyes of his lost darling had never needed warmth and light, and the sight of flowers, and the song of birds, and the bloom of summer fruits. Starving on a morsel of dried fish himself, he had bought the purple grapes of their own sierras for Agostino. And there

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was something caressing, vivid, engaging, appealing in the boy which had repaid this fully in affection, even whilst he had gone farthest from straight paths.

He drank the Montepulciano wine that was brought him now, and with it youth and hope recovered their unstrung powers, and the dread despair that had pressed on him in Trevenna's presence relaxed. Eat he could not; but as he leaned there, resting his Murillo head upon his arm, and absently gazing at the red flicker of the lamp-flame in the wine, something of light flashed over his face; he raised his head with an eager gesture.

"Father, I have a thought! Listen. Last year, when I was in the Vega, I met an Englishman; it was in the autumn morning, and I was lying, doing nothing, among the grass as he rode by. He rode slowly, and I saw him well. I never saw a face like his; to look at it was like hearing music. He caught my eyes, and stopped his horse, and asked the way towards Granada; he had fallen on a by-path through the vines. I could scarcely answer him for looking at his face; it was so beautiful. He noticed it, perhaps, for he asked me what I thought of that I was so absent; and I told him truly, 'I was thinking you look like David,—a Poet-King.' He laughed, and said none ever paid him a more graceful flattery; but it was not flattery, I *was* thinking so. Then he smiled and looked more closely at me. 'You are of the pure Sephardim race, are you not?' he asked me, and I

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wondered how he knew; for he was not one of us, but an azure-eyed, golden-haired Gentile. I never saw him again in Spain; but this year I saw a gentleman coming down the steps of one of the great mansions to go to his carriage in the gaslight,—and I knew him again; he was in Court dress, and I asked who he was of the people. They said he was very famous, very generous, very high in all distinctions, and that none ever asked him a kindness in vain. He is great —you can tell that by his glance; he is gentle—you can tell that by his smile. I know his worst foe might trust to his honour, and trust to his pity. I will go to him and tell him all, and see if he can free me. He knows *him*, for he was with him that night."

"And his name, the crowds told you?"

"Is Chandos."

The old Hebrew, who had listened, half beguiled as by a poetic tale, started, his hands clenched on the papers that had been left with him; a change of alarm and of eagerness flushed over the dark olive of his inscrutable face; his voice rose harsh and imperative in his anxiety, while a pang of shame and of disquietude shook its tone.

"You dream like a child, Agostino! Chandos! yes, *he* knows him, and by that very reason you must never approach him. You have no choice but obedience; you are in his power, and his first law is silence on all that connects him with us. Break it by a whisper, and he will spare you not one moment more. Besides

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this Chandos, this fine gentleman, this delicate aristocrat—he would shut his doors to a beggared Jew!"

"He would not," murmured the boy in a soft whisper.

"No matter whether he would or no! Go near him, and the worst fate you dread will teach you the cost of disobedience. Ah, Agostino! listen. Be patient, be docile; bear the yoke yet a while, and I will buy you safety with my labour; I will earn your liberation with my service. Only be patient, and you shall not suffer."

The first words had been spoken with the stern authority of the Mosaic code; the latter closed in the yearning tenderness of his infinite devotion to his only son.

Agostino bowed his head in silence; it was not in him to resist; it was greatly in him to fear. His head sank down upon his arms once more in the abandonment of a dejection the more bitter and more prostrated because the gleam of a youth's romantic hope had flickered over it, and had died out; he thought still that the stranger, who had seemed to him like the Poet-King of his own Israel when the crown was first set on his proud, sunlit, unworn brow, could raise him from his despair, and loose his fetters. The yellow lamp burned sullenly on, its thin smoke curled up in the leaden noisome air of the pent city alley; the night passed on, and the boy still sat listless and heart-broken there, while Ignatius Mathias, bent

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above his desk, passed back to the world of hard acumen, of merciless exaction, of unerring requisition, of grinding tribute: with those exact figures, with those names so fair in the world's account, so fouled in his, with those passages which wrote out the ruin of those in whom the world saw no flaw, the evil entered into his soul, and the higher nature perished. He laboured to free his darling; what cared he how many living hearts might have the life-blood pressed out of them under the weights he was employed to pile, so that with that crimson wine his task-master was pleased and satiated?

"*Il faut manger ou être mangé.*" The world is divided into spiders and flies; Trevenna had chosen to join the former order, and his webs were woven far and finely.

And the church clocks of the empty city tolled dully through the misty night the quarters and hours one by one; and as the lad Agostino sat dreaming of that autumn morning in the Vega, with the hot light on the bronze leaves and purple clusters of the vines, and the joyous song of a muleteer echoing from the distance, while the Moorish ruins of mosque and castle rose clear against the cloudless skies, the grand, bent form of the old Israelite, once majestic as any prophet's of Palestine, stooped over the crumpled papers that bore the signature—

"Ernest Chandos."

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CHAPTER II.

THE DARK DIADEM.

ASCOT-WEEK came, and at the cottage which Chandos usually took for the races—a bijou of a cottage that was used in the hunting season as a hunting-box for its proximity to the Queen's stag-hounds—Trevenna, with five or six others, spent the pleasantest days in the calendar. The gayest and most fashionable racing-time in the world, with its crowds of dainty beauties and its aristocratic throngs, was nowhere more fully enjoyed than at that pretty Ascot lodge, with its merry breakfasts before the drags came round, and its witty dinners after the day was over. Dubosc, the great *chef* of Park-lane, went thither daily in his little brown brougham to superintend the meals of his master and his guests, and throw in that finishing artistic touch

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which made them unsurpassable. The party was perfectly chosen, and perfectly attuned to each other: there were two Peers, great on the Turf, but great as wits as well; there was a French Duke, amusing as Grammont; there was an author as racy as Theodore Hook; a famous French artist, brightest of bright satirists; an Italian Prince, the best-natured and gayest-hearted of men; and there was John Trevenna, who, though people might call him impudent, audacious, pushing, and even a little coarse, was nevertheless to society—specially this sort of society—what a comet-year is to claret, and a truffle-harvest to gourmets. The party was charming, with its leaven of gay Bohemianism mingled with its fashionable atmosphere; and it amused Chandos admirably, as he was used to be amused by life. From the time he was three years old, when Princesses had played ball with him, and Ambassadresses bribed him with bonbons to give them a kiss, he had been accustomed to live amongst those who beguiled his time for him without effort; and the world seemed naturally to group itself round him in changing tableaux that never left him a dull moment. He had no need to exert himself to seek pleasure; pleasure came unbidden in every varying form to him, seductive and protean as a coquette.

Chandos loved horses, rode them superbly, and had all the lore of the desert; but the slang and the society of the Turf he abhorred. He hated the roar

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of a ring, the uproar of a betting-room, the jargon of a trainer, the intrigues of the flat. But the Clarencieux establishment had long before his time been famous for good things; his grandfather, the Duke, too, had won the Derby the same year that he was given the Garter, and was prouder in his heart of the first Blue Ribbon than of the last; his own horses had carried off all the best stakes in various years at Newmarket, Doncaster, Epsom, and Goodwood, and he always backed his favourites freely and with great spirit; nothing was ever entered by him that the blackest little rogue on the flat could ever suspect might not be "meant." Therefore, if his horses lost, of course he lost considerably, though this, owing to the superiority of the strains and the excellence of his trainer, had very rarely occurred; nor was it likely to occur at Ascot, for far and away at the head of the field stood, almost untouched by any rival for the Cup, his famous four-year-old Sir Galahad.

It caused him no uneasiness that in certain quarters there was a disposition to offer against the favourite, and that this was done with a regularity and a caution which might have suggested the fact of a commission being out to lay against him. He noticed it, indeed, but with that carelessness which made him too facilely persuaded, and was content to believe the explanation Trevenna offered him, that a rumour had got abroad of Sir Galahad having a touch of cough.

"Very good thing for us, too," said Trevenna,

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shrugging his shoulders. "Galahad's right as a trivet, and if we can heighten the whisper to influenza, and take all the odds against him, there'll be a pot of money to show——"

He stopped; he perceived that for once his acumen had been faulty, and had overreached itself; he saw that he had tried a dangerous path with a man who, in all other ways, was so pliant to his hand through the weaknesses of insouciance and of indolence. Chandos turned to him with a look on his face that he had never seen there. "Roguery makes a poor jest," he said, coldly. "If any one win a shilling by the rumour, knowing its falsity, he may take his name off my visiting-list. I will see that the horse is given his next morning gallop over the Heath as publicly as possible, so that it may be known he is in perfect condition."

And he did so. Trevenna the Astute had made a false step for the sole time in their intercourse, and thought to himself, "Chivalry on the flat! If it ever come into fashion, we may sow wheat on the Beacon Course, and grow tares by Tattenham Corner. Mercy!—what a fool he is, with all his talents!"

He did seem a very great fool to Trevenna; but then, as Trevenna reflected, there was not much wonder in that, after all, for the man was a poet—in his view, as in Lady Chesterton's, synonymous with saying he was a lunatic.

"Looks well, Ernest," said the Duke of Castle-

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maine, where he stood, amongst other members of the Jockey Club, eyeing Sir Galahad as he came on the Heath on the morning of the Cup Day.

"He can't be more fit," answered Chandos, with his race-glass up, "and I don't see what there is to beat him."

"Nothing," said John Trevenna, who was always pleasantly positive to men about their own successes. There is not a more agreeable social quality. "I think the field's hardly strong enough to do him full credit; there is scarce a good thing in it. Lotus Lily's pretty, no doubt, very taking-looking, and her arms and knees are good; but she won't stay."

With which Trevenna, after his general trenchant fashion, clenched the matter, his authoritativeness being usually forgiven for its exceeding accuracy: he was never found wrong. But it highly displeased the grand old Duke, the longest-lived and highest-born of all the dons of the Jockey Club, to have this audacious dictator dealing out his opinions unbidden at his elbow. He hated the fellow, and hated to see him there; so much, indeed, that he would have found means to turn him out of the stand, had he not been brought thither by and through his grandson. He pointed with his glass to a long, low, rakish-looking chesnut, that, with hood and quarter-piece on, was being walked quietly and unnoticed about, forgotten among the ruck, while Sir Galahad, Lotus Lily, and

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the rest of the cracks drew the eyes and awoke the admiration of the Heath.

"You are false to your Order, sir," he said grimly. "There's the horse you should back, if you were true to your form—a 'rank outsider,' entered under an *alias*, came from nobody knows where, and foisted into running for a Cup, while he should be standing in a cab. You should have sympathy, sir!"

The satire was significant enough without the fiery glance that the Duke's Plantagenet eyes, blue as those tradition gives to Edward of York, flashed on him. The haughty old noble traced descent from the House of York.

Trevenna could have hurled a curse at his white hairs, with the snarl of a furious dog, so bitterly the arrow rankled, so keenly he felt that this man alone read him as he was. But he had trained himself better; he laughed without a sign of temper.

"An awkward brute! I don't fancy him. Who likes their own Order, Duke? You find *yours* so dull sometimes that you come to the brains of Nobodies to amuse you!"

"Fellow can always hit you back again," thought his Grace, "and never shows when he's struck. But that overdone good humour means mischief: if a man smile under an affront, he may be above, but he's much more likely to be beneath, resenting it. Now, I'd have respected the fellow if he had showed

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fight in hard earnest; but he laughs at too much not to mean to take his measure out for it some day."

And the Duke adjusted his Voigtlander, and took a long look at the cracks as the saddling-bell rang, and Sir Galahad passed him with his flanks shining like satin, his knee-action beautiful, and his calm reposeful glance proudly eyeing the throngs that hung on his steps.

Chandos looked at the favourite as a man must always look at the nearly certain winner of a great stake when that winner comes out of his own establishment, and has been bred from the famous strains that have made the celebrity and the success of the stable for a century. The passion of the Turf was impossible to him, and to concentrate his life on the winning or losing of money would have been as grotesque to his fancy as to centre it on eating or drinking; his nature and his tastes led him to so many forms of enjoyment, to so many shapes of attraction, that the gaming-pleasures and lusts of the "flat" had but little hold on him. On the other hand, however, as strong an interest centred for him in the running of his horses, of whom he was both naturally proud and passionately fond. In the ten years gone by since his majority, he had won the Derby twice, and most other Cups and stakes of note some time or other. The "Chandos strains" were very celebrated; and he watched the winning

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of his colours with little, if any, thought of the sums hazarded on them, but with a loving pleasure in the triumphs of the gallant beasts that had known his voice and his touch from the first days of their colt or filly-hood, when they had gambolled by their dam's side under the broad-spreading branches of the oaks and elms at Clarencieux.

He did not set himself the value on Sir Galahad that he did on a young colt that was looked on by his trainer as a certainty for the next Guineas and Derby; but the horse was a brilliant winner, and it was next to an impossibility that anything could beat him on the Ascot course, unless, indeed, it were Lotus Lily —a mare of considerable promise and performance, but who was not thought to have the stay in her requisite for the running. The saddling-bell rang, the telegram-board was hoisted up, the start was given; the field swept out like a fan, disentangling one from another, a confused mass, for a moment, of bright and various hues. Then from the press there launched forward, with the well-known, light, stretching stride that covered distance so marvellously, the Clarencieux favourite, shaking himself clear of all the running, and leading at a canter, which, unextended and easy as it was, left even Lotus Lily and Queen of the Fairies behind by two lengths. All eyes on the course and the stands were fastened on the match between the cracks. Scarce any one noted among the ruck one chesnut outsider, ugly, awkward, but

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with great girth of barrel and power of action, which, ridden with singularly fine judgment by a Yorkshire jock of a little-known and merely local reputation, was quietly singling out from the rest, and warily waiting on the two favourites—so warily, that, imperceptibly yet surely, he quickened his pace, passed Queen of the Fairies, and gained upon Lotus Lily till he struggled with her neck by neck. So little known was he, so dark had he been kept, that as he ran even with the mare, two lengths behind the Clarencieux crack, half the multitude upon the Heath knew neither his name nor owner, and the fashionable gatherings on the stands looked at their cards bewildered as to whom this outsider belonged to, with his feather-weight in the unrecognised grey and yellow with purple hoops, that was even with the aristocratic scarlet and white of Lotus Lily's jockey, and barely now a length and a half behind the famous blue and gold of Chandos' popular colours.

Fleet as the lightning the three swept on, no other near them even by a bad third; their jocks becoming but mere specks of colour, whose course was watched with breathless, strained anxiety: extended now to the uttermost of his splendid pace, Sir Galahad, conscious for the first time of a rival not to be disdained, and, perhaps, scarcely to be beaten, ran like the wind, the Diadem chesnut gaining on him at every yard, the mare behind by hopeless lengths. Chandos leant forward, and his breath came and went quickly.

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The Duke, as through his glass he watched the race, that had now become a match, with the eager interest of the chief of a great House, whose name had been famous on the Turf since the days of Eclipse and Flying Dutchman, shifted his Voigtlander uneasily as he muttered, in the depths of his snow-white beard,

"The dark one wins, by God!"

The dark one did win. Nearer and nearer, faster and faster, the ungainly and massive limbs of the Yorkshire horse brought him alongside the graceful and perfect shape of the Ascot favourite; and from the vast crowds upon the purple heather of the Heath the shouts echoed the old Duke's words, "The outsider wins!" "The outsider has it!" A moment, and they ran neck to neck; the gallant crack of the Clarencieux stable, with all the mettle in him roused to fire, strove for a second manfully with this unknown and unexpected foe; then—with a single forward spring, like magic, the outsider outstripped him by a head, and ran in at the distance winner of the Ascot Cup.

"A very clever horse," said Chandos, calmly, as he dropped his race-glass.

"D—n you!" thought one who stood next him. "There is no fun in beating you; you never *will* show when you're down."

"Owned by some very clever rascals," said the Duke, as he shut up his lorgnon with a clash, while

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his eyes filled with the hot fiery wrath that in his youth had been swift and terrible as a tempest. "The chesnut has been kept dark as night. Whoever is at the bottom of it has too much science in him to have much honesty left. Mr. Trevenna, why did you not take my advice, and back your own Order? The outsider wins, you see!"

John Trevenna laughed, such a merry, good-natured laugh, that it was infectious.

"But I did not believe in him, sir; nor do I now. I shall hope you will have inquiries made; for there must be something very dark here. Galahad *looked* well ridden; and if well ridden, there was nothing, I should have thought, on the Turf could have beaten him."

"This is no case for the Jockey Club; you know that, sir, as well as I do," said his Grace, sharply, with peremptory hauteur. "The chesnut's won fairly, so far as the running goes; the roguery has been beforehand."

Trevenna shrugged his shoulders.

"It must have taken a deuced deal of roguery to have kept such a flier as that ugly brute dark all the three years of his life. Chandos, how cool you are! If I owned Sir Galahad, I should tear that Diadem's jock out of saddle."

Chandos lifted his eyebrows.

"My bay is beaten; there is no more to be said. The best thing to do is to forget it as soon as possible.

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"Humph!—without introduction?"

"Well, one makes many acquaintances so on the Continent." He smiled as he thought that their only introduction had been through the Baden Bank and Baden Prison.

"Certainly; but we don't often bring them home with us," rejoined his Grace, with a still grim significance. "What account did you have from him of himself?"

"Really I have forgotten; I was only a boy—eighteen or nineteen, I think."

The Duke tapped his Louis Quatorze snuff-box with an ominous dissatisfaction.

"You are a very clever man, Ernest, but you are too easily fooled, if you will pardon my saying so. You can believe it or disbelieve it, as you please; but I am as certain as that I stand on this hearth-rug that the fellow you defend knows more than he ought about the history and the running of that d—d Yorkshire chesnut."

With which the old Nestor of the Jockey Club took his Bolongaro in a grand and silent wrath, unappeased, as Chandos smiled still, and answered him,—unconvinced:

"It is your over-kindness for me, my dear Duke, that makes you so unusually suspicious. I wish I were as satisfied of every one's good will to me, as I am of poor Trevenna's. Good Heavens! I would as soon believe that my butler plans to poison me in my

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champagne, and that my valet means to assassinate me as I dress for dinner!"

He laughed lightly as he spoke, and turned to his other guests, who just then entered the drawing-room—amongst them Trevenna himself.

The dinner was of the choicest. Dubosc, with a touch of kindly feeling that this great master was never without (lively and sympathetic Parisian that he was), having heard of the Turf disappointments of an employer who seldom failed to appreciate his genius, tendered consolation, in delicate thoughtfulness, by a sudden and marvellous inspiration of artistic invention, producing results with a turbot such as Europe had never heard or conceived, and to which he positively attended with his own hands, throughout the critical moments of preparation, watched breathlessly by his satellites and subordinates. Chandos and his guests were connoisseurs, on whom such an *éprouvette positive*, to use Brillat-Savarin's term, could not be tried but with fullest success. Chandos sent a message of appreciation to the great chief himself; and Dubosc was conscious that the employer who could have remembered a horse's running ill, while he was consoled with such a triumph as the new *turbot au Clarencieux*, would have been a man whose soul was dead indeed.

"He *felt* it?" asked the master of the kitchen of the stately fellow-functionary in black, with the silver chain of office round his neck, who brought

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him the message of recognition. "You think he felt it? There is so much in soul!"

"I am sure he felt it," replied the other, solemnly. "He has always proper feeling on those matters."

"Yes," sighed Dubosc, "but he has not the devotion that one could wish—a fine taste, but careless. He thinks too much of pictures and statues, and all those trifles, to bring his mind rightly to the great science."

"There is something in that," assented Silver Chain, regretfully. "To see it really felt, you should have seen that little vulgar creature, that Trevenna, taste it. *There* was an *éprouvette!*"

"Ah!" sighed Dubosc still; "but it is sad when the good taste goes out of the great Orders. He felt it, did he? That man will have a career!"

Dubosc's *éprouvette* did not fail to restore the life and wit to the party, which it had in some degree lost by the losing of Galahad; for all had laid more or less heavy sums on the favourite. Gaiety and bon mots resumed their customary reign; the Italian Prince and the French artist were most brilliant on the stimulus of the matchless turbot and the no less matchless wines. Chandos always lent himself quickly with the easiest will to be consoled; and the hours sparkled along on swift feet and to pleasant cadence, despite the disaster of the Cup Day. Trevenna was in the highest spirits, which he checked slightly when he caught the azure flash

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of the Duke's eyes, but not enough to prevent his being the salt and savour of the dinner-party, as was his custom everywhere. They lingered long over their pine-apples and peaches, their Lafitte and Johannisberger; and, after coffee, they played whist in the pretty little Ascot drawing-room till the sun looked in through the grape-tendrils and vine-leaves about the casements; and, by the dawn, Chandos had forgot his first contretemps, his first annoyance, as though it had never been.

In the sunny summer morning, as Trevenna sauntered into his bedroom (he had no valet, as has been said, and employed servants scarcely at all), he tossed thirty sovereigns, he had won from his host at whist, down on his dressing-table; and, throwing himself into his arm-chair, indulged in a genuine hearty peal of laughter that rang out through the open window, towards the quiet solitary heather-purpled expanse of the Heath.

"Sold the whole Turf, by Jove!" he murmured; "and forty thousand netted by commission, as I live, if there's a farthing! What a day's work! Trevenna, *bon enfant*, really you are a clever fellow."

He admired himself with a cordial almost wondering admiration that was very different from vanity, and more like the self-content and self-applause with which a man who has been up every col and peak in the Alpine range regards the names of his hazardous and successful feats burnt in on the shaft of

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his Alpenstock. He laughed again, to himself, when he lay back in the cozy depths of his chair, with his hands plunged into his trouser-pockets, and a genuine self-satisfaction brightly set on every line of his face. There is an exhilaration to the heart of the successful engineer who sees every morass drained, every ravine bridged, every girder made strong, every obstacle overcome, by his own indomitable energy, and watches the viaduct of his own rearing and planning span the mighty distance that seemed at first to laugh his puny efforts to conquer it to scorn. This was the exhilaration Trevenna felt now. That he was reaching his success by dark, by crooked, by unscrupulous ways, took nothing from his enjoyment. They were to him what the morass, the ravine, and the quicksands are to the engineer. Had his road been straight and smooth, where would have been this joyous excitement in his own victories, this triumphant zest in his own engineering science?

As he took off his dress-coat, undid his necktie, and lighted a cigar, he pulled the curtains aside and leaned out of the window into the soft summer-dawn air. Not that he cared a whit for the heliotrope and mignonette odours rising from the garden beneath, for the dews on the blossoming lindens, for the sunrise on the bloom of the heather; those things were to Chandos' taste, not to his; but he liked to look at that quiet deserted Heath, where the dark Diadem

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had borne off the Cup from the favourite. It had put forty thousand in his pocket, or, rather, in those far away American and Indian markets where the penniless man about town put every penny even that he won at whist or loo, in sure and secret speculations; but it had a still sweeter pleasure than lay in the money for him.

"So the outsider beat the Clarencieux crack!" he thought, with a smile. "A prophecy! Duke,—I won't quarrel with you; I'll back my Order to win."

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CHAPTER III.

BUTTERFLIES ON THE PIN.

"ERNEST, are you going to marry?" asked his Grace, dryly, in the bay-window of White's.

Chandos looked up in amazement.

"Marry?—Heaven forbid!"

"Then don't go after that beautiful daughter of Ivors. She will marry you in a month or two more, if you do, whether you wish it or not."

Chandos moved restlessly; he did not like the introduction of painful topics, and marriage was a very painful one in his view.

"If you *do* marry," pursued the Duke, remorselessly, "take the Princess Louise; she is lovelier than anything else the sun shines on, and has the only rank from which a woman can love *you* without a suspicion of interested motives."

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"My dear Duke, I am totally innocent of the faintest intentions to marry anybody!"

Nevertheless, the subject was not acceptable to him, and he looked a little absently out into St. James's-street with a certain shade of uncertainty and of restlessness on him; whereas, the moment previous, he had been watching the women in their carriages through his eye-glass, with the idlest and easiest languor of a warm day towards the close of the season.

"Marry—no; not for an universe," mused Chandos. A few hours afterwards he entered his house in Park-lane, to make his toilette for a dinner at Buckingham Palace; and turned with a sudden thought to his maître d'hôtel, as he passed him in the hall. "Telegraph to Ryde, Wentwood, for them to have the yacht ready; and tell Alexis to prepare to start with me to-morrow morning. I shall go to the East."

His yacht was always kept in sailing order, and his servants were accustomed to travel into Asia Minor or to Mexico at a moment's notice. Chandos was used to say, very justly, that the chief privilege of money was that it made you quit of the obligation to meditate a thing five minutes before you did it. Looking long at anything, whether travel or what not, always brushes the bloom off it. He liked to wake in the morning, and, if the fancy took him, be away, without a second's consideration, to the glow of

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the new Western world or the patriarchal poetry of the East; and, so well were his wishes always provided for, that he went to sleep in one place and unclosed his eyes in another, almost as though he possessed the magic floating carpet of Prince Hassan.

The next morning the *Aphrodite* steamed out of Ryde harbour on the way to Italy, the Levant, and Constantinople, while its owner lay under an awning, with great lumps of ice in his golden cool Rhine wine, and the handsome eyes of Flora de l'Orme flashing laughter downward on him while she leaned above, fanning his hair with an Indian feather-screen. The Duke's words had acted like a spell; but in his abrupt departure there was one person he had not forgotten. On his dressing-table lay a note to Trevenna, bidding him make use of his moors in Inverness-shire with the Twelfth as he pleased, or, if he preferred it, give the Scottish shootings to any friend he preferred, and take any guests he liked down to Clarencieux for the magnificent preserves of that ancient place.

These reversions and donations of windfalls and of pleasant places to lend, or to invite, to were fast making Trevenna very popular among that large class of men on the town—dandies, do-nothings, authors, artists, and club-loungers—who have a certain reputation that floats the min the world, but no certainty of entrée to the good houses, and no means to purchase for themselves the pleasures of the moors

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and coverts. It began to get him courted among them; and he was a very genial host, royally lavish with Chandos' wines, most good-naturedly ready with offers of hospitality to Chandos' empty houses, so much so that men almost forgot, while they stayed with him, that wines and houses were not both his own.

"Gone to the East! By Jove, I'll go and find the Chesterton," thought Trevenna, with all the relish of a schoolboy for sowing mischief, as he read the note and heard of his patron's departure. He was a little sorry Chandos had gone; he never liked losing him from under his eyes; but he was fully consoled by the prospect of reigning as Viceroy at Clarencieux, and of seeing the mortification of the two daughters of Ivors. They were as poor as rats; they could never do him any good. Trevenna felt at liberty to teaze them just as he liked. A restriction was too often put on his merry malicious mousing by a prudential recollection of the social status of his mice, and of the use they might be to him in nibbling a way for him into patrician pantries. Here the mice were very poor; so he tracked Lady Chesterton and her sister to a garden-party, and ate his pine-apple in most admirably feigned carelessness and unconsciousness close to the two ladies under a Lebanon cedar. He knew the consternation he should scatter through society by his news.

"I don't see Mr. Chandos here this morning," said Lady Chesterton, turning to him with a bland smile,

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condescending to be civil because she was curious. She was also a little uneasy; otherwise, be sure, she would never have had recourse to that "vulgar little toady," as her ladyship designated the acute outsider.

"No, he isn't here," assented Trevenna, indifferently. He had now put this handsome empress butterfly on the point of his pin, and went leisurely about it.

"He is well, I hope?" she pursued.

Trevenna shrugged his shoulders. "Never was ill in his life, that I know of—perfect constitution."

"What a rude insufferable bear!" thought the unhappy butterfly; but she was still more uneasy than ever, and had no recourse so good as the bear, so she resumed her inquiries. "Do you know where he is to-day? I have something to tell him about Rose Berri china."

"Your ladyship must send it by post, then;" and Trevenna laughed to himself as he saw the first irrepressible writhe of his victim on the pin.

"By post! Has he left town?"

Trevenna looked at his watch.

"By this time he is midway across to L'Orient. He has taken his yacht to go down south and eastward."

"So early!" Trained and icy woman of the world though she was, she could not repress the pallor that blanched her lip, the anxiety that loomed in her handsome eyes. The Queen of Lilies stood near. Hearing also, she was silent and very pale.

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"Well, Ascot was late," answered Trevenna, cheerfully. "He generally does stay for Goodwood, to be sure; but you see he has had so many London seasons, and there's such hard running made on him, I think he gets sick of it."

This thrust the pins in cruelly, indeed, through the delicate wings of the brilliant butterflies. "That coarse horror!" thought Lady Chesterton, with a shiver of disgusted wrath; but her heart was very heavy, and she had to conceal her chagrin as best she might with all the gay garden-groups fluttering around her, and viewing her impaled. "Will he be away long?" she asked of her tormentor.

"Oh dear yes," said Trevenna, carelessly. "Gone to his summer-palace on the Bosphorus; takes the Morea and the Levant on the way. Poetic man, you know! likes that sort of thing; loves Greece; enjoys Corfu. I hate 'em both. Snakes and old stones in the one; rocks, rags, and bad ragoûts in the other. 'Ruins' and 'scenery,' they tell you. I like stucco, and pantomime scenes. Besides, they always fry so villanously in those hot places; glad to get away from the fire, perhaps. When anybody talks of the Acropolis and the Alhambra, I always smell oil and garlic, and feel myself starving in memory on a melon."

He glanced at his butterflies as he chattered, and saw that the pin was entering their souls like iron. He thrust it down a little deeper as Lady Chesterton asked, with a voice that, despite herself, *could* not be

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careless, "Mr. Chandos will be long before he returns, then, I suppose?"

"Won't come back till next spring," assented Trevenna. "He'll winter in Paris; always does, as you know. Delicious hôtel that is of his, by the way, in the Champs Elysées. Clarencieux isn't likely to see anything of him."

Which was the unkindest cut of all, seeing that Trevenna knew very well that the Baroness had persuaded her husband to take a little estate near Clarencieux for two years' shooting, on purpose that the Queen of Lilies might conquer in the country, if she failed in the town. The husband had grumbled, because he could ill afford it. He was terribly poor; but he had been persuaded into it by the assurance from his wife of Chandos' admiration of his fair sister-in-law; and now Chandos was not going to Clarencieux!

"I've paid you off, my lady," thought Trevenna, finishing his ice. "You've found what it is to call me 'a vulgar little wretch, who lives nobody knows where.'"

Not that Trevenna had any particular dislike to these two women, beyond his general dislike to all and any members of the aristocratic order; but as the boy feels no dislike to the cockchafer he spins on a string, but finds amusement in its pain, and therefore sticks a crooked pin through its poor humming body, and puts it to pain accordingly, so Trevenna felt and did with all humanity.

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Gilles de Retz enjoyed the physical convulsions of his victims; Trevenna, as became a more humoristic temper and a more refined age, enjoyed seeing the mental contortions of his.

And yet the fellow had his good points, some very good points indeed. He had indomitable energy, perseverance, industry, patience, self-denial—the greatest virtues in the Carlylese school, which deifies Work. Perhaps it would have been well if both Trevenna and that School had alike considered more the worth and meaning of the purpose, before they gave an apotheosis to the fact, of labour.

The Lily-Queen and her sister drove homeward in perfect silence from the garden-party, where society was lamenting with its softest sighs the loss of its idol and leader—a loss that was much more a blow to the season than if the Court had gone into seclusion: the true Royalty of society is Fashion. There was a dead silence between them till they reached the pretty little violet and gold boudoir on the top of the staircase that was specially dedicated to the use of Lady Valencia. Then the Baroness unclasped her diamond aigrette, and flung off her Chantilly laces with an impetuous, passionate bitterness in the action, and looked a world of scorn out of her black eyes on to her fair sister.

"I told you so, Valencia! I knew you would never win him."

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The Queen of Lilies answered nothing, but stood there in her still and matchless grace, a slight flush of proud restrained pain only passing over her face.

"I told you I knew it was utterly useless," went on Lady Chesterton with woman's favourite reproach—"*Je l'avais bien dit.*" "Courted, sought, flattered, worshipped as he is, do you suppose he would surrender his liberty and marry? Ridiculous! I told you the Princess Louise d'Alve is actually dying of love for him: they would give him to her to-morrow. She is as beautiful as you are, though you think nobody can be; and Chandos cares for her no more than he cares for that tabouret at your feet. No more he does for you. No more he ever did for anybody, unless it were that infamous little French Countess who has nothing in the world but her eyes and her figure. I told you you could never touch him!"

Still the Queen of Lilies said nothing. With a haughty but admirable self-command, she held her peace under the lash of her sister's words. Great ladies do not always take their high breeding home with them to the privacy of their own boudoirs; and the Baroness, though daughter to the Marquis of Ivors, was poor, disappointed, and bitterly at feud with all creation, because she had not been born a man to hold the Ivors title.

"And there is that place near Clarencieux hired for nothing!" her ladyship bewailed with tears of mortification in her eyes. "I am sure I hate the

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country. I would fifty times rather have gone to Baden or somewhere abroad; and we shall be obliged to go and live there. Chess won't let the money be wasted; he made such a fuss about ever taking it. We might meet Chandos at Paris, of course, if we were like anybody else; but we haven't income enough to live in any style there, and go to the Tuileries, and all that, as you must do if you're in Paris at all. We shall be moped down at that wretched place in the country all winter for nothing. I am positive you might have done better if you had tried. You might have made him say something serious, the night before last, at the Court ball. He certainly admired you—admired you very greatly!"

The Baroness stopped for lack of breath, reckless that her last charge against her sister totally nullified her first statements—no one ever stays to be consistent in anger—and paused in fiery wrath and scorn, swaying her parasol to and fro in impatient bitterness.

The Lily-Queen lifted her drooped lids.

"I regret you should be put to any inconvenience through me," she said, coldly. "You will allow that *I* never suggested we should go near Clarencieux. I never approved of the appearance it would inevitably bear."

"That is all the gratitude I receive!" cried her sister, with considerable passion, the greater because she was conscious that her own manœuvres for the

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brilliant owner of Clarencieux had gone beyond what her sister deemed delicate or wise. "I suppose you will say that it was I who suggested you should wear the Lucrèce dress at his fancy ball."

"As it was," said the Lady Valencia, calmly.

"Indeed! Oh, very well!" cried her sister, with the laugh that with women denotes the last climax of passion. "Die unmarried and penniless, Valencia, if you choose; it is no matter to *me!* Only remember you have not fifty pounds a year of your own, and my milliner's bills come already to more than my husband will pay without recourse to his Jews; I shall add yours to them no more after this."

With that last shaft home the Peeress flashed from the room in a storm of fluttering lace and fiery wrath. The Queen of Lilies stood silent and motionless some moments more, then she went almost mechanically to the door, closed it, slipped its bolt, and, sinking down on one of the couches, dropped her proud head on her hands and sobbed as bitter tears as any woman ever shed.

The last evening light streamed through the painted panes of her exotic-shrouded window, and straying along the bright path of the little dainty gorgeously coloured boudoir, fell across her fair brow and delicate hands, with their antique rings gleaming on their whiteness, which were clasped in pain till the glittering points of the stones cut the skin.

Was it love or vanity that was thus cruelly

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wounded? Was it the broken ambition for which she wept, or the broken hope of a softer desire? Was it the heart that was lost, the voice that was silent, the eloquent eyes that looked on her sno more, that were so bitterly lamented; or was it the leadership of the fashion, the stately magnificence of Clarencieux, the prize that all her sex sought and coveted—the attainted Marquisate of the Chandos which with any moment might be restored—that were the objects of that mortified and humiliated grief?

Who shall say?

Some love, certes, there was in it.

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CHAPTER IV.

"STRAIGHT WAS A PATH OF GOLD FOR HIM."

If the Lily-Queen hoped for remembrance from her lost lover, she hoped for a well-nigh hopeless thing.

The kaleidoscope of Chandos' life changed so incessantly that it was rarely indeed any picture that had been whirled past him retained the slightest claim on his memory. He was always seeing one that seemed better than the last. Partly this was traceable to his own temperament, but chiefly it was due to the avidity with which all his world catered for him. Now, as the yacht swept on her gay way, there could be nothing more charming than that voyage through "isles of eternal summer," and through seas laughing in an endless sunlight. Pausing when he would, Italian cities on the fair sea-coast gave him

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amusement under their aisles of orange-boughs, blending fruit and blossom till golden globes and snowy flowers swayed together against the warm bright brows of their rich Titian women. Becalmed on a sunny silent noon, he could lie stretched at ease under the deck-tent, with all the perfumes of chesnut-woods, and myrtle-slopes, and citron-gardens wafted to him across the water, while ice-cold wines sparkled ready to his hand, and light laughter or melodious music whiled the hours away. Landing at his fancy, he would indolently watch the little grey azida fly among the ivy-covered stones of the great Pan's broken altars, or the fire-flies gleam and glisten above a contadina's hair while she gathered in her harvest of the yellow gold of gourds. Sailing at night through silent starlit leagues of sea, he would think a poet's thoughts in a charmed solitude, while the phospher-light glistened under silvery vintage-moons, and the ceaseless swell of waves murmured through the night. Or, when lighter fancies took him, under the shade of leaning walnut-trees and red rocks crowned with Greek or Roman ruins, where, the vessel moored in some nestling bay, he wound the starry cyclamen in women's silken hair, and listened to their liquid voices laughing out soft Anacreonic songs over grape-clusters that might have brought back upon the soil the gay elastic feet of banished Dionysus. He was not sated, he was not wearied; he was what thousands pass from their cradles to their

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graves without truly being for an hour—he was happy. Oh, golden science! too little thought of, too quickly abjured, by men. That glorious power of *enjoyment!* we trample it under foot as we press through the world, as the herds seeking herbage trample the violets unheeded.

The summer months passed swiftly with Chandos; by leisurely loitering, the yacht at length wound her pleasant way down to the Bosphorus, and dropped anchor there opposite his summer-palace above Stamboul—a fairy place, with its minarets rising above a wilderness of cactus and pomegranate, of roses and myrtle, with the boughs of lemon and orange, and fig-trees topping the marble garden walls, and the showers of lofty fountains flung cool and fresh under the deep shadows of cedar and cypress. Here, with a French troop of actors for the bijou theatre he had some years before annexed to the palace; with a score or so of friends from Florence, Rome, and Naples, brilliant, indolent Italians, the very people for the place; with sport, when he cared for it, in the wild deer and other large game of the interior; with as complete a solitude when he wished, and as utter an absence of every memory of the world beyond, as though he were a Hafiz or Firdursi amidst the Eastern roses of a virgin earth; here the autumn months passed by, and all the indolent repose and vivid colour he loved blent in his life were mingled to a marvel.

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The very inconsistencies of his character made the charm of his existence; through them, turn by turn, he enjoyed the pleasures of all men, of all minds, and of all temperaments. He who walks straight along the beaten road, turning neither to the right nor left, nor loitering by the way, will reach soonest to his destination; but he enjoys the beauty of the earth the best who, having no fixed goal, no pressing end, leaves the highway for every fair nook and leafy resting-place that allures him, and lingers musing here, and hastens laughing there. Consistency is excellent, and may be very noble; but the Greeks did not err when they called the wisest man the man who was "versatile." There is no such charm as "many-sidedness."

Chandos loved the East; he had lived much there, either at his summer-palace, or deeper in the heart of it towards Damascus; he liked, of a summer morning, to float down the soft grey Bosphorus water amongst the fragrant water-weeds, with the silver scales and the prismatic hues of the gliding fish shining through green swathes of sea-grass or drooped boughs of hanging gardens; he liked in the stillness of starry nights, when the first Call to Prayer echoed up from the valley below as the faint gleam of dawn pierced the distance, to sit alone upon the flat palace-roof and let his lonely thoughts "wander through eternity," as thus upon the house-top under the Asian stars, yonder afar in Palestine, the great poet-

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kings had thought, gazing on their Syrian skies, and on the hushed, dark, sleeping Syrian world, and musing on that vanitas vanitatum which has pursued all lives from theirs to ours. He loved the East, and he stayed there till the first hiss of the winter storms was curling the Marmoran waves, and the first white blinding mists rushing over the sea. Then he left that summer paradise where, more yet than anywhere, he felt "how good is man's life—the mere living," and travelled quickly across the Continent to Paris, and wintered there in all the utmost brilliance of its ceaseless gaieties.

He was one of the idols of Paris; its fashionable world welcomed him as one of its highest leaders, its artistic world as one of its truest friends, its literary world as one of its choicest chiefs, its feminine world as one of its proudest conquests. He was never more at home than in Paris, and Paris, from the Tuileries to the atelier, always delighted to honour him, always flocked to his fêtes as the most magnificent since those of Soubise and Lauraguais, quoted his bon mots, followed his fashions, painted him, sculptured him, courted him, made him its sovereign, and found the wit of Rivarol, the beauty of Richelieu, and the grace of Avaux, revived in this "bel Anglais aux cheveux dorés."

In this sparkling whirlpool of his Paris winter thought had little entrance, remembrance little chance; every hour had its own amusement, every moment its

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own seduction; ennui could not approach, "sad satiety" could not be known. Yet, despite it all, now and then upon him, in the glittering follies of a Court masquerade, or the soft shadows of some patrician coquette's boudoir, as in the starlit silence of Turkish nights, and under the Asiatic gloom of Lebanon cedars, a certain impatient depression, a certain vague passionate restlessness, came on him, new to his life, and bitter there.

It came thus, because for the first time he could not forget at his will, because for the first time a passion he repulsed pursued him.

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CHAPTER V.

CLARENCIEUX.

THE rare red deer herded in the great forests, and the herons plumed their silver wings in the waters, down at Clarencieux. Kestrels wheeled in the sunny skies, and the proud gerfalcon came there. The soft owls flitted among the broken arches of the ruined Lady's Chapel; and teal and mallard crowded in the deep brown pools that lay so still and cool beneath the roofing of the leaves. It was a paradise for all living things of river, earth, and air; and it was beautiful enough for an Eden where it sloped down to the seas on the south-west coast, in a climate so tempered that the tall fuschia-hedges grew wild as honeysuckle, and the myrtles blossomed as though it were Sorrento. Covering leagues of country, stretching over miles of tawny beach, of red-ribbed rock, of glorious deer-forest, and of heath all golden with the gorze, Claren-

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cieux was the great possession of a great house; and its castle bore the marks of Cromwell's petronels, gained when the Cavalier-lord of the Stuart times, Evelyn Chandos, Marquis of Clarencieux, had held it after Marston Moor till the Ironsides swore in their teeth that Satan fought there in the guise of that "Chandos with the golden hair"—the "beautiful Belial," as they called him, when, with his long light locks floating, and his velvet and lace as gay as for a Court ball, he charged out on them in such fiery fashion, that he, with his troop of eighty (all that fire and sword had left him), drove six hundred steel-clad besiegers pell-mell, like sheep to the slaughter, down through his mighty woods and headlong to the sea. Raised in the days when the mediæval nobles were

> Building royallie
> Their mansions curiouslie
> With turrets and with towers,
> With halls and with bowres,
> Hanging about their walles
> Clothes of gold and palles,
> Arras of rich arraye,
> Fresh as flowers of Maye,

Clarencieux, with its tall antique louvre, its massive battlemented towers, its fretted pinnacles, its superb range of Gothic windows, its foliaged tracery, so marvellously delicate on such massive stonework, stood in all magnificence still, the master-work of centuries.

Between it and the great marble pile adjoining, of the newly made Earl of Clydesmore, stretched a wide

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impassable gulf of difference never to be bridged. Lilliesford had cost more than a million in erection, and Europe had been ransacked to adorn it; but the difference betwixt the two was as immense as that betwixt the bronze Perseus of Benvenuto and the ormolu statuette of a Pall-Mall goldsmith, between rich old Rhenish glowing in an antique Venetian goblet and new Clicquot hissing in a mousseline glass, between paint and pearls and silken skirts gathered with gracious grace about a nobly born court-beauty and tinsel flung with heavy hand and tawdry taste around a stage-queen uneasy in her robes and in her crown.

Lilliesford was very gorgeous; but Clarencieux alone was grand.

The setting sun was reddening all the antique painted panes of its innumerable lancet-windows; the deer were leaving their couches in the ferns to begin their nightly wanderings; the last light was shed on the bold curve of the coast-rocks and the sea that stretched beyond; beneath the trees in the dense forest night was already come, as a carriage swept through the miles of avenue, and Chandos came back from the East to his home. Though in the wayward love of change which would make us weary to wander from eternal bliss itself if we enjoyed it with our present natures, he lived much abroad, now here, and now there, he loved Clarencieux with a great and enduring love—a love

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that might have almost been termed passionate, so constant was it, and so bound up with every grey stone and hoary tree. With him, though hatred of pain made him sometimes seem heartless, and love of pleasure and carelessness of temper made him habitually nonchalant, the feelings were still strong, and were not sacrificed either to the intellect or the senses. He could feel, as he could enjoy, vividly; and the most vivid sentiment in his heart was the attachment to his birthplace, to his great hereditary possessions, not for their worth, their splendour, or their envied superiority, but from a fond and almost filial tenderness for all the venerable beauty of the noble place—for the sound of its sea, for the width of its woodland, for the smile of its sunlight, for the memories of its past.

He leaned forward as the carriage drove swiftly through the great vales of oak and beech and elm, and looked at it in the glow of the cloudless spring-time sunset. Before him, in the distance, rose the front of the royal pile, all golden where the sun-rays glistened and lit its glass to flame, all dark where the ivy climbed to the height of the battlemented towers, and the rolling woods of the inland forests stretched upward on the hill-sides beyond, an endless stretch of dewy April leaf. "It is almost ungrateful ever to leave it," he thought. "There is nothing nobler abroad. I will live here more for the future." And a vague, irrepressible melancholy, wholly unlike

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his temperament, stole on him, despite himself, as he looked at the home of his race—fair as it was in the sunset warmth, sure as it was in his possession. The thought crossed him how, ere long, at most, he must look upon its loveliness no more, but lie among the dead leaders of his name, there yonder to the westward, where the silent graves told the vain story of their lifeless glories.

It was well-nigh the first time that the "memento mori" had ever crossed his gay unruffled years, nor did it linger with him long.

Ten minutes more and he was within the immense circular and vaulted hall of Clarencieux, in its dim splendour of purple and gold, of Renaissance hues and Renaissance carvings, with the gleam of armour and the flash of Damascus blades from the walls, and with the flood of light pouring down the double flight of stairs that swept upward on either side of the far end. There was not such another hall as that of Clarencieux in the kingdom of England. At the time of the siege, Evelyn Chandos had marshalled and marched six hundred Royalists at ease in it under the great banner that still hung there, the azure of the Chandos' colours, with their arms and their lost coronet, and their motto, "Tout est perdu fors l'honneur," broidered on its folds. His descendant now, as he entered it and came into the scarlet glow of the vast oak-wood fire which burned there almost all the year, looked round it with the affectionate remem-

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brance of the man who comes back to the place of his brightest childish memories. "I will not leave it so long again," he thought once more, as he passed through the line of bowing servants.

His households were always attached to him with a warmer feeling than the mere tie of self-interest. Moreover, there were men and women here in the Clarencieux establishment whose fathers had lived under a Chandos generation after generation, from the days of Flodden Field and Tewkesbury. The service they rendered him was given with a loving loyalty, with the old feudal allegiance; and even the fashionable French and Italian domestics who had left palaces to come to him, such as Dubosc himself, Alexis, his head valet, Morivaux, the groom of the chambers, and others, felt a certain pride in, and personal liking for him. Chandos had been born with that nameless gift which some natures have, of insensibly and without effort attracting personal attachment. Dogs, and birds, and horses, and human things alike, felt regard for him, and gentleness to him at the first sound of his voice. His temperament was one that kills hatred as the sun melts snow. There was but one hatred borne to him, hard and unbending as steel, which it could not soften, any more than the sun can dissolve marble.

Out of a doorway on the left, in the warmth and the light, and down the staircase, as he heard his host's and patron's arrival, came Trevenna, mirthful and

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full of bonhomie as the brightness of the leaping fire whose ruddy gleams shone on his handsome white teeth, and his pleasant smile of welcome.

"As your factor, steward, head butler, head secretary, head trainer, minister of the finance, and master of the horse, let me welcome you home, monseigneur," he cried, as he took the hand Chandos held out to him. "London's in desperation at your absence. What a delicious winter you've had in Paris! Never got a bit tanned in the East, either. How *do* you keep your skin so fair?"

"By no cosmetique but cold water," laughed Chandos. "Charmed to see you, my dear Trevenna. No one makes me laugh so well even in Paris, except, perhaps, my exquisite Rahel. Why didn't you join me there?"

"Too busy," rejoined the other, shaking his head. He had had delightful quarters at Clarencieux through the winter, running up to town most weeks at his inclination, and asking men down for the pheasants, the coursing, and the deer-drives, till he was quite a popular and courted personage.

"What a Burleigh shake of the head! I should like to be told what your business is. Choosing cigars, and gathering gossip?" laughed Chandos. "Well, you know you would have been welcome, had you come. I didn't want you in the East, because you see, my dear fellow, you are not precisely poetic, and I like things to harmonise; but Paris was scarcely

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itself without you. I thought of you every time I had your favourite ortolans *à la Princesse Mathilde* at the Maison Dorée."

"Ah, the little angels!" said Trevenna, lusciously recalling their spiced and succulent beauties. "Dubosc even never gets them *quite* right. I'd a long talk with him about it. I told him I thought they wanted a shade more lemon, and just to be stewed in the Chambertin long enough to get the aroma; but, like every artist, he's as obstinate as a pig, and won't take a hint."

"You might be a club cook, Trevenna," laughed Chandos; "you would soon make a fortune. Any one here yet?"

"Only a few men—Greville, Bantry, Lee, Vere; just a few to amuse you. I have taken infinite care in sending the invitations. There are good talkers and good listeners; there are two or three who hate one another—that always makes 'em sparkle, out of spite; and there is not a single one who talks politics. You won't be bored for five minutes. They are all your favourite set. Prince Paul Corona, the Duc de Neuilly, and most of the ladies come, I believe, to-morrow."

"Ah! Madame de la Vivarol comes also. She invited herself, and her *fourgons* are already crossing the Channel." He said it with a little sigh. He would rather she had not been coming: chains, however silken and sweet, were unendurable to Chandos.

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"And you could not say 'No,' of course, to *la belle*. Did you ever say 'No,' Chandos?"

"I think not: why should I? 'Yes' is so much easier, and so much more gracious. 'No' floats you into endless trouble, but 'Yes' pleases everybody."

"'Yes' is a deuced compromising little word, though," said Trevenna.

"It is better to be compromised than to be ungracious," said Chandos, with a lift of his eyebrows. "I will go and have a bath, and then tell them to bring me some coffee up, will you, please? I shall not show to-night; they will serve my dinner in the little Greuze room. I have a charming novel of Eugène de Meisédore's I promised him to read; and if you can leave the other men and come and tell me the news of the town, I shall be pleased to see you."

"All right," said Trevenna, as his host passed up one of the great staircases to his private rooms, a suite looking over the rose-gardens, and consisting of his bedroom, dressing-room, study, atelier, and a beautiful little oval cabinet chamber called the Greuze room, from its being chiefly hung with female portraits, and such bewitching pictures as "La Cruche Cassée," by that artist, where Chandos dined by himself or with two or three of his choicest guests, when he was not in the mood for the society of the fifty or sixty people who generally filled Clarencieux in the recesses and the shooting-seasons. All these rooms opened one within another; and a dainty dinner from Dubosc's genius in

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the deep hues of the Greuze chamber with the violet curtains drawn, and the white wax-light shining on the fair female heads, was as pleasant an evening as could be needed.

"I must see poor Lulli; there is no welcome, after all, so true as his and as Beau Sire's," thought Chandos, after his coffee and his bath. "I suppose he is here; of course he is. I wish I could take him news of that lost Valeria." And, acting on the thought, he went to the musician's apartment. He never sent for Lulli. The crippled infirmity of the artist made the traversing of the long corridors and galleries of Clarencieux very painful and tedious to him; and Chandos, who never put himself out of the way for a prince, invariably remembered the calamity of the Provençale. The chamber given to Lulli was much like that provided for him in Park-lane, containing everything that could assist or entertain him in his art, and, at the farther end, a single statue in Carrara marble—a Cecilia, by Canova—which gleamed white out of the unlightened gloom as Chandos entered noiselessly, unpreceded by any servant.

"Lulli, where are you?" At the first sound of the only voice he loved, or had ever cause to love, the musician, where he sat bent in the twilight, lifted his head with a low joyous cry, and came forward as quickly as his weak bent limbs would let him—a man who looked as though he had wandered, by

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some strange transplanting, out of the dim cells of a Paraclete, or the hushed antiquity of some mediæval city of Italy, from all his brethren who found their pale sad lives only solaced by some great art-gift, and dreamt of things that they had never known in the monastic silence of a living grave.

His brown wistful eyes, so deep, so wise, so dreamy, so spaniel-like in their faithful loyalty, grew brilliant; the transformation changed the weary listlessness of his face, that never failed to come there at sight of the man who had rescued him, and to whom he owed all. He welcomed him, in his own liquid southern French, with what Chandos had rightly adjudged the truest welcome of any in his world. To no one, not even to the women who loved him, did his presence ever bring a pleasure and a gratitude so deep and so sincere as it brought to this poor cripple.

"Ah, Lulli!" said Chandos, with that caressing gentleness with which he always addressed the man so utterly dependent on him, so hopelessly deprived of health and strength and all the joys of living, yet so compensated by nature with one grand gift alone. "I wish you had been with me in the East. I have heard no music from all the singers of Europe that has power to charm me like yours. Do you think the voyage would have harmed you?"

"I must have seen strangers, monseigneur," answered Lulli, with that shrinking dread of new faces

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and new voices, the result chiefly of his infirm health, partly of the languid, contemptuous curiosity and aristocratic impertinence of those who noticed him, at such rare times as they thought of him, as "the mad musician Chandos keeps to lead his concerts."

"Well, no strangers should have treated you otherwise than with courtesy and reverence in my presence," said Chandos, kindly. "I wish you could shake off this timidity, this great sensitiveness; they do your marvellous talent injustice with the world."

Lulli shook his head: he knew that even the shield of his friend's power could not ward off him the shafts that struck him home, the barbed arrows of contemptuous wonder, contemptuous loathing, or, worst of all, contemptuous pity.

"I would do all in the world to please *you*, monseigneur," he answered, sadly; "but I cannot change my nature. The little aziola loves the shade, and shrinks from noise and glare and all the ways of men; I am like it. You cannot make the aziola a bird for sunlight; you cannot make me as others are."

Chandos looked down on him with an almost tender compassion. To him, whose years were so rich in every pleasure and every delight that men can enjoy, the loneliness and pain of Lulli's life, divorced from all the living world, made it a marvel profoundly melancholy, profoundly formed to claim the utmost gentleness and sympathy.

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"I would not have you as others are, Lulli," he said, softly. "If in all the selfishness and pleasures of our world there were not some here and there to give their lives to high thoughts and to unselfish things, as you give yours, we should soon, I fear, forget that such existed. But for such recluse devotion to an art as yours, the classics would have perished; without the cloister-penmen, the laws of science would never have broken the bondage of tradition."

Lulli looked up eagerly, then his head drooped again with the inexpressible weariness of that vain longing which "toils to reach the stars."

"Ah, what is the best that I reach?—the breath of the wind which passes, and sighs, and is heard no more."

The words were so utterly mournful that the shadow of their own sadness fell on Chandos as he listened. He sighed half restlessly.

"Is there any fame that becomes more than that with a few brief years? I do not know it."

Lulli's eyes turned unconsciously to the music-scroll that lay on the desk beside him, the score of passages grand and tempestuous as Beethoven's. "I do not want fame, if *they* might live," he murmured low to himself, too low to reach the ear of Chandos as he stood above him, who stooped nearer and laid his hand kindly on the musician's shoulder.

"Dear Lulli," he said, hesitatingly, "I tried to gain news for you of your Valeria whilst I was in

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Paris. I had inquiries made in Arles; but all was ineffectual."

Lulli lifted his eyes with that deep dog-like gratitude which always touched Chandos well-nigh with pain.

"You never forget me, monseigneur. Take no more heed of her; she is dead to me."

"Hush! that is too harsh for *your* gentle creed, Lulli," said Chandos, whilst his hand still lay caressingly on the Provençale's shoulder. "I abhor those bitter, brutal Hebrew codes. Wait till at least you know her story."

"There is no need to wait; it is dishonour."

Out of the dreaming softness of his southern eyes new fire flashed, and on the frail delicacy of his face a sternness set. Never yet was there a recluse who had tolerance; and the honour of his genius-dowered name was as dear to the beggared artist as to the haughtiest royal line.

"As the world's prejudices hold," said Chandos. "There is more real dishonour in the woman who gives herself to a base marriage for its gold, than in the one who gives herself to calumniation for a generous love. And it may be that Valeria——"

"Monseigneur, I pray you, speak of her no more. I have said she is dead to me."

There was so intense a suffering in the words that Chandos forbore to press the wound still so keenly nerved, still so fresh to every touch, although two

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years had passed by since the loss of the young Provençale girl from Arles.

"Then think of her no more, Guido," he said, kindly. "I cannot bear that you should have anything to grieve you. Life is too short to spend its hours in sorrow. And now, how is it with the *Ariadne in Naxos*? It must have progressed far while I have been away?"

He had recalled Lulli to a theme even dearer than Valeria had ever been. The *Ariadne* was an opera on whose composition he was lavishing all his love, his time, his luxuriant fancy, and his singular talents. Chandos himself had written for it the Italian libretto, and had lent all his knowledge of music towards its perfecting; it was yet scarcely finished, but it was to be produced under his own auspices, and at his own expense. It would be the touchstone of Lulli's powers and success: the supreme trial which would either consign him amidst that circle of the lost, those dwellers in the Antenora of dead hopes, who had it in them to be great and failed; or would place him amidst the names of his idolatry, Gluck, Handel, Mendelssohn, Rossini, Mozart.

They lingered over it. Chandos heard some portions new to him, and read the score of others, giving it thought, and care, and interest for a twofold reason—for its own beauty as an opera, and for the hopes which Lulli centred in it; then, leaving the musician to the solitude he prized, he went back to his Greuze cabinet for dinner.

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After that little chef-d'œuvre of the genius of Dubosc, who, to do him the justice he deserved, never exerted himself more when half a dozen European princes had the *menu* than when he prepared a succession of delicate trifles for the solitary enjoyment of his master, Chandos stood leaning against the mantelpiece, glancing through his Paris friend's novel. The warmth of the logs on the silver andirons was behind him, the violet velvet and the glow of the painted chamber around, and the light fell full on the amused smile on his lips, the beauty of his face, and the easy, indolent grace of his resting attitude, as Trevenna drew back the portière and entered. He looked at his host with that acrid envy which never was stilled in him, the petty, evil envy of a woman, for every elegance of form, for every magnificence of manhood, unpossessed by himself and inherited by the man he watched. Yet he consoled himself, looking on that pleasant repose in the picture-cabinet, that unconscious half-smile over the witticisms of the French pages.

"Very well! very well, my *grand seigneur!*" thought Trevenna, "smile away in Clarencieux; you won't smile long."

And Trevenna, after playing the part of host in the banqueting-hall at dinner to the eight or ten men already staying in the house for the Easter recess, went forward into the ruddy wood-fire light to taste a little Lafitte and eat another olive or two with his host, and amuse him with all the mirth and

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mischief of the town gathered in his absence, told as John Trevenna could only tell it, till its wit was as bright as Meisédore's novel, and its relish as piquant as the golden liqueurs.

"What a good fellow he is!" thought Chandos. "I am half afraid he would be too clever for the Commons; a decorous dulness is what passes best there, and a fellow is almost sooner pardoned for being a bore than for being brilliant. They think there is something so intensely respectable about mediocrity. But still—he has so many qualities that might get his cleverness forgiven him, even there. He is a marvellously good man of business, a financier, I will warrant, such as has not sat on the Treasury Board, and he has an acumen that cannot be overrated. I will certainly get him into St. Stephen's; once in, he will make his own name."

"Chandos," said the Duke of Crowndiamonds, in the stable-yard two mornings later, when his Grace, with the rest of Chandos' London set, had come down to Clarencieux, "did you hear what that fellow of yours—your factor, your protégé, what is it?—has been doing while you were away?"

"I have no protégés, my dear Crown," said Chandos, wilfully failing to apprehend him. "I abhor the word."

"Well, you have the thing, at any rate. You know

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whom I mean—that witty rascal, Trevenna. Do you know what he's been about?"

"No. Spending his time to some purpose, I dare say, which may be more than can be said of us."

The young Duke laughed.

"Doing an abominably impudent thing, to my mind. Been down somewhere by Darshampton (democratic place, you know), talking something or other out-and-out radical. Why, it was all in the papers!"

"Never read the papers," said Chandos, with a little shrug of his shoulders.

"Addressing the masses, you know, as they call it; coming out no end at an Institute, or a what d'ye call 'em. Tell him, Jimmy," said Crowndiamonds, wearily, appealing to a certain fashionable hanger-on of his, who played the part in society of the Duke's mnemonique.

"Working men's place at Darshampton—all working men there," supplemented Jimmy, obediently. "Fellows that look awfully smutty, you know, and throw things they call clogs at you, if they cut up rough; though *why* they use women's clogs, *I* don't know. Trevenna been down there—asked to lecture, did lecture! Talked out-and-out liberalism, all but Socialism, by Jove! Town wondered; thought it deuced odd; knew you couldn't like it; couldn't think what was his game." With which Jimmy, having performed his office of encyclopædia, turned to the more congenial one of examining a beautiful little mare of the

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Godolphin strain, which had won the Oaks the year before. Chandos listened, surprised.

"Trevenna at Darshampton!" he repeated, musingly.

"Ah, I knew you couldn't be aware of it," resumed Crowndiamonds. "Told them all so; knew you'd have interfered, if you had."

"Interfered! How so?"

"Why, forbidden it, you know; and all that, of course."

"Why? I have no more right to forbid Trevenna's actions than I have to forbid yours."

"Oh, hang it, Ernest, you don't mean that. The fellow belongs to you, one of your people, quite; can't have any title to go dead against your political opinions."

"Never had a political opinion," said Chandos, with a shade of weariness at the mere idea—"wouldn't keep such a thing for worlds. There is nothing more annoying to your acquaintance, or more destructive to your own nervous system."

"Then, the deuce, Chandos, you don't mean that you'd let that fellow go on talking radicalism all over the country without checking him, or calling him to order?" chorused the Duke, M. de Neuilly, Prince Paul, and the others in the stables, all of them strict monarchists, conservatives, and aristocrats.

Chandos laughed, but with a touch of impatience. "You talk as if Trevenna were my slave instead of

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my friend! Call him to order!—what do you mean? I may think what I like of his actions; but I have no shadow of right to interfere with them."

"What! not if you saw him joining a party that threatened the very preservation of your own property, the very existence of your own class?"

"Still less then. Self-interest is the last motive that could excuse an aggression on personal liberty."

"Good gracious!" ejaculated the Duke, as though foreseeing the Deluge. "Then if you put him into the Commons, as you intend, you will let him choose his own party, go his own ways, run dead against all your interests and all your opinions, just as he pleases?"

"Certainly. Do you suppose I only sell my friendship to secure partisanship?"

"God knows what you *do* do!" cried Crowndiamonds, hopelessly. "All I do know is, that I should as soon have thought of seeing Clarencieux turned into an hospital as of hearing you defend radicalism!"

"My dear Crown," laughed Chandos, "I am not defending radicalism; I am defending the right of personal liberty. I may deeply regret the way Trevenna takes in the House; but I shall certainly have no business to control him there because superiorities of property might enable me to do so. You say, 'You have bought him, therefore you have a right to coerce him;' I say, 'I have aided him, therefore I am bound never to make that accident a shackle to him.'

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The man who puts chains on another's limbs is only one shade worse than he who puts fetters on another's free thoughts, and on another's free conscience. But, for mercy's sake, drop the subject: we are talking like moral essayists, and growing polemical and dull accordingly!"

And Chandos turned to give some Paris bonbons to his favourite Circassian stallion, who was rubbing his sleek steel-grey head caressingly against his hand for the sweetmeats, leaving Crowndiamonds in the conviction that the constitution was coming to an end, and the Legitimist Duc and the Tuscan Prince strongly of Lady Chesterton's persuasion, that when a man was also a poet Clarencieux might be his inheritance, but Colney Hatch would be his destination.

Clarencieux was filled with guests on the carefully chosen invitations of which Travenna had spoken. He had the very social tactics that enabled him unerringly to mark out harmonising tints and effective contrasts so as to make a charming whole. His plan was bold and daring, but it never failed: he always asked special enemies together, that they might sparkle the more for being ground against each other's faces, like two diamonds on a lapidarist's revolving wheel; and under his directions the visitors that met at Chandos' house never were wearied, or wearied their host, for a single hour. Few houses can boast so much. According to the seasons, they rode, drove, smoked, played baccarat or billiards, had drives of

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deer in the forest, and curées by torchlight, French vaudevilles and Italian operette in the private theatre, spent the day each after his own fashion, free as air, met at dinner to have some novel amusement every evening, and were the envy and marvel of the County, the County being little wanted in, and generally shut out from, the exclusive gatherings of Clarencieux.

Yet well amused as his guests kept him in the Easter recess, which fell very late in spring that year, Chandos had a certain restlessness he could not conquer, a certain dissatisfaction utterly unlike his nature: he could not forget the Queen of Lilies. Never before had a love touched him that was unwelcome to him, never one that he had attempted to resist; love had been the most facile of all his pleasures, the most poetic but also the most changeful amusement of his life. For the first time he had to resist its passion, and the very effort riveted its influence. He had always forgotten easily and at will; now he could not so well command forgetfulness.

Now and then all the variety of entertainments that chased one on another failed to interest him, all the brilliance of his companions to suffice for him; the wit and beauty of the great ladies who adorned the drawing-rooms of Cheveley almost tired him; he was conscious of wanting what was absent. It was a phase of feeling very new to him, nor with the nonchalance and contentment of his temperament and the gaiety of his life could it have the rule over him always.

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But it was there, a dissatisfied passion from which there was no chance of wholly escaping.

Moreover, recalling the soft glance of the Lily-Queen, he wondered with a touch of self-reproach if she had really loved him? He knew many who had; nor was his conscience wholly free from self-accusation on their score or on hers.

The Countess de la Vivarol, radiant at Clarencieux, playing in *Figaro* to his *Almaviva*, riding a little Spanish mare that would have thrown any other woman, always enchanting, whether she talked of Faïence-ware or European imbroglio, lapdogs or protocols, fashions or mesmerisms, flattered herself that her rival, the English Lily, was wholly forgotten and deserted; but the keen little politician flattered herself in vain.

Trevenna, with his habitual sagacity, made no such mistake, but pronounced unerringly, in his own reflections, on the cause of his host's needing so much more care to rivet his attention, and so much more novelty to amuse him than usual. He guessed why the Princesse Vallera, the Marchesa de Lavoltra, the Comtesse Lucile de Meran, and other fair queens of society, reigning through this recess at Clarencieux, failed in charming or winning their entertainer. "If he meet her again, shall I let it go on?" thought that astute comptroller. "Yes; may as well. It will be another complication, as the diplomatists say. Nothing like fine scenic arrangements for a tragedy!"

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So the Queen of Lilies would apparently have no foe in John Trevenna, although he had put the pin through the butterflies under the cedars.

"Reading some unintelligible score of your ancestors, Lulli?" asked Chandos, as having wandered out alone one morning, taking the freedom himself that he left his guests, he came upon the musician lying in the sun beside the river that wound through the deer-park. The woodlands were in their first fresh leaf; the primroses, violets, anemones, and hyacinths made the moss a world of blossom; nothing was stirring except when a hare darted through the grasses, or a wild pigeon stooped down from a bough to drink, or to bathe its pretty rosy feet among the dew. It was peaceful and lovely here in the heart of the vast deer-forest, with a gleam of the sea in the dim distance at the end of a long avenue of chesnut-trees. "How crabbed a scroll," he went on, throwing himself down a moment on the thyme and grass. "The characters must baffle even you; the years that have yellowed the vellum have altered the fashion. Whose is it?"

"An old Elizabethan musician's," answered Lulli, as he looked up. "Yes; the years take all—our youth, our work, our life, even our graves."

Something in his Provençale cadence gave a rhythm to his simplest speech; the words fell sadly on his listener's ear, though on the sensuous luxuriance of his own existence no shadow ever rested, no skeleton ever crouched.

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"Yes; the years take all," he said, with a certain sadness on him. "How many imperfected resolves, unachieved careers, unaccomplished ambitions, immatured discoveries, perish under the rapidity of time, as unripe fruits fall before their season! Bichât died at thirty-one!—if he had lived, his name would now have outshone Aristotle's."

"We live too little time to do anything even for the art we give our life to," murmured Lulli, with his deep-brown southern eyes dreamily wandering down the green and golden vista of the sun-lightened avenue. "When we die, our work dies with us: our better self must perish with our bodies; the first change of fashion will sweep it into oblivion."

"Yet something may last of it," suggested Chandos, while his hand wandered among the blue bells of the curling hyacinths. "Because few save scholars read the 'Defensio Populi' now, the work it did for free thought cannot die. None the less does the cathedral enrich Cologne, because the name of the man who begot its beauty has passed unrecorded. None the less is the world aided by the effort of every true and daring mind, because the thinker himself has been crushed down in the rush of unthinking crowds."

"No—if *it* could live!" murmured Lulli, softly, with a musing pain in the broken words. "But look! this scroll was as dear to its writer as his score to Beethoven; the child of his love, cradled in his thoughts night and day, cherished as never mother

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cherished her first-born, beloved as wife or mistress, son or daughter, never were. Perhaps he denied himself much to give his time more to its labour; and when he died, lonely and in want, because he had pursued that for which men called him a dreamer, his latest thought was of the work which never could speak to others as it spoke to him, which he must die and leave, in anguish that none ever felt to sever from a human thing. Yet—what remains of his love and his toil? It is gone, as a laugh or a sob dies off the ear, leaving no echo behind. His name signed here tells nothing to the men for whom he laboured, adds nothing to the art for which he lived. As it is with him, so will it be with me."

His voice, that had risen in sudden and untutored eloquence, sank suddenly into the sadness and the weariness of the man whose highest joy is but relief from pain; and in it was a keener pang still—the grief of one who strives for what incessantly escapes him.

"Wait," said Chandos, gently. "Are we sure that nothing lives of the music you mourn? It may live on the lips of the people, in those old-world songs whose cause we cannot trace, yet which come sweet and fresh transmitted to every generation. How often we hear some nameless melody echo down a country-side: the singers cannot tell you whence it came; they only know their mothers sang it by their cradles, and they will sing it by their children's. But in the past the song had its birth in genius."

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Guido Lulli bent his head.

"True! such an immortality were all-sufficient: we could well afford to have our names forgotten——"

"Our names will be infallibly forgotten unless we attach them to a great sauce or to a great battle; nothing the world deifies so much as the men who feed it and the men who kill it. Paradox in appearance, but fact in reality!" cried a sharp, clear, metallic voice—the voice to ring over a noisy assembly, but in no way the voice to suit a forest solitude, as Trevenna dashed through the brushwood with a couple of terriers barking right and left at hares and pigeons. The musician shrank back instantly and irrepressibly, as a sensitive plant or a dianthus shrinks at a touch. "Hallo, mon Prince!" pursued Trevenna, cheerily. "You *are* a disciple of the dolce, and no mistake! Easiest lounging-chair in-doors and wild thyme out; luxurious idleness really is a science in your hands. If ever you do die—which I think highly doubtful, you are such a pet of Fortune!—the order of your decease will surely be to 'die of a rose in aromatic pain.' Nothing harsher could possibly suit you."

"You antithesis of repose!" cried Chandos. "You will scare all my breeding-game, frighten all my song-birds, and drive me to a new retreat."

Trevenna laughed as he dashed himself down on a bed of hyacinths fit for Titania's wedding-couch, that sent out their delicious fragrance, bowing their delicate bells under his weight: Trevenna weighed a

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good deal, though a small man. Chandos glanced at them.

"Wanton waste, Trevenna! You are the genius of destruction."

"Well, destruction's very pleasant—of anybody else's property. Everybody thinks so, though nobody says so."

The man had a natural candour in him, with all his artifice of action. He hated hypocrisy with an oddly genuine hatred, seeing that he was as cool a liar as ever was born. It seemed as if, like Madame du Deffand, he wished to render virtue, by his words, the honour he robbed her of by his actions; for he talked truths sharply, and as often hit himself with them as other people.

"But why can you want to kill all those poor flowers for nothing?" asked Chandos, tossing him his cigar-case.

"For nothing! *Sac à papier!*—is it for nothing when I lie at my ease? To be comfortable is your first requisite of life. Cæsar killed men by millions to lie at *his* ease on purples; why mayn't I kill flowers by millions to lie at mine on hyacinths? Flowers, too! A lot of weeds."

"Oh, Peter Bell the Second!" cried Chandos, shrugging his shoulders.

"A yellow primrose on the river's brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more,"

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quoted Trevenna. "Now, what the deuce more should it be? How that unhappy fellow has been abused for not being able to see a thing as it wasn't —always the thing for which poets howl at sane men! Why are he and I required to rhapsodise over hyacinths and primroses—nice little flowers, one blue, t'other yellow, with a pleasant smell, but certainly nothing remarkable. What is this miraculous tongue that talks to you artists in a scrubby little bit of moss or a beggarly bunch of violets?"

"Grimm asked Diderot the same question. You would have wondered, like Grimm, what there could be to listen to from an ear of wheat and a little corn-flower."

"Certainly: Grimm was very like me—a regular gossip," responded Trevenna, pulling a handful of hyacinths and tossing them up in the air. "My dear weeds, you must die, if I choose. Ah!—it's fun to have power over anything, great or small. Fouquier Tinville enjoyed cutting off necks by a nod of his own; I understand that; *you* don't understand it, monseigneur. If we'd been in the Terror, you'd have gone to the guillotine with the point ruffles over your hands, and a mot on your lips, and a superb smile of disdainful pity for the mob; and I should have tossed up my red cap and spun round in the 'Ça ira,' and cheered the Sansons, and gone safe through it all. But good-bye; I'm going to your outlying farms. Did you know I was a first-rate agri-

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culturist? Of course, you don't; what do you know about any Bucolics, except the Virgilian?" with which Trevenna, much too mercurial to sit still five minutes, went on his way, switching the grasses right and left, and with his two little terriers barking in furious chorus.

Lulli looked after him; Chandos himself, even, was glad he was gone. He enjoyed the merry society of his fidus Achates in a club or over a claret; but there were times when, cordial as was his good will to him Trevenna irritated rather his tastes than his temper, and his incessant banter grew wearisome.

"You trust that gentleman?" asked Lulli, suddenly.

"Entirely," answered Chandos, surprised.

"I would not," said the Provençale, softly, under his breath.

"Indeed! and why?"

Over Lulli's face came the troubled, bewildered look which made those who noticed him cursorily think his brain was unsettled. He felt, but he could not define. To a mind only used to desultory dreamy thoughts, it was impossible to trace out its workings by logic.

"I cannot tell," he said, wearily, "but I would not trust him. The eyes are bright and clear, the face looks honest; yet there is craft somewhere. The dogs all slink from him; and the birds, that come to us, fly from him. He is your friend; but I do not think he bears you any love——"

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He ceased, looking down, still with that bewildered pain, upon the clear brown river rushing, swollen and melodious, at his feet. Like a woman, he had intuition, but no power of argument. Chandos looked at him, astonished more at the words than he had been at the secluded dreamer's distaste towards the busy and trenchant man of the world.

"I hope you are wrong, Lulli," he said, gently. "*I* do not doubt you are. You and that gentleman can have little in common; but you are both valued friends to me——What is the matter?"

Lulli, as he gazed down into the water, had started, turned, and looked behind him into the great depths of shadow, where the trees grew so densely, that even at noon it was twilight beneath their branches, which curled, and twined, and grew in ponderous growth, almost rather like a Mexican than English forest. Lulli's face suddenly flushed, his large eyes opened wider, his lips trembled; he strove to rise rapidly, and fell back.

"I heard Valeria's voice!" he said, hushed and breathlessly, while his glance wandered in restless longing hither and thither, like a listening deer's.

"Valeria's!" echoed Chandos, in amazement, as he rose to his feet. "You must be dreaming, Lulli."

The Provençale shook his head, and pointed eagerly towards the recesses of the woods.

"I heard it! Look—pray look."

Willing to humour him, yet satisfied that it could

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be but a delusion of the ear, common enough with such minds as Lulli's, when one dearly loved has been lost, he went some little way into the deer-coverts, glanced right and left, heard nothing except the cooing of wood-pigeons, the note of a missel-thrush, and the cry of a landrail, and returned.

"It must have been imagination, Guido," he said, soothingly. "Some bird's song, perhaps, sounded like a human voice. There is no creature near."

"I heard it," said Lulli, very low to himself, while his head drooped, and his gaze fell again with the old weariness upon the ebb and flow of the river. He would never have contradicted a thing that Chandos had said, if he had died through it; but the superstitious and ignorant beliefs which the early training of a childhood spent in ultramontanist countries, joined to the deeply imaginative mind of a visionary whom no intercourse with a broader world than his own thoughts enlightened or controlled, had imbued him with, made him in his own heart turn rather to the wild and baseless fancy that the voice he believed he had heard was the supernatural sign of Valeria's death—the farewell of her spirit released from earth. Lulli had been born amidst all the legendary mysticism and mediæval traditions of an almost Spanish Catholicism. The hues of it had coloured his mind too deeply ever to be wholly altered. It made his grandeur as a musician; but equally it made his utter weakness as a man.

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"Poor fellow! he cannot forget this Valeria," thought Chandos, who was for the first time feeling himself the doubt whether forgetfulness could be commanded, as he went to where he had thrown his horse's bridle across a bough (he had brought no groom with him), for a canter through his own forests, and rode down the length of the avenue at a dashing half-speed which soon broke into an almost racing gallop. An hour afterwards, sweeping round again by nearly the same portion of the woods, only through so dense a covert that he had to go at much slower speed through the low boughs, all green with their young leaves, and all melodious with the spring-songs of innumerable nest-birds, he overtook a solitary pedestrian, considerably to his wonder and annoyance.

Clarencieux was strictly preserved. It would have been made a show-place during their master's absence only at risk of instant dismissal of any servants concerned in showing it; and no stranger's feet ever trod the mosses and the ferns of the mighty deer-forest sloping to the sea. Chandos checked his stallion as he passed this interloper, and, to his surprise, recognised his near neighbour, the Earl of Clydesmore, a man with whom he had but the most distant acquaintance, having invariably declined the efforts the Earl had made towards any sort of intimacy. Chandos never knew bores, not if they were Princes, and considered his neighbour a bore of the very worst description; Lord Clydesmore was one of that happily designated class, the "worldly holies."

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The Earl, a tall fair man of a rather handsome presence, not more than five-and-thirty years of age, apologised for his intrusion with considerable grace and a little too much effusion. He had lines and a salmon-rod in his hand, and explained himself as passionately fond of all river-science. A grilse he had hooked had dragged him after it down the length of the water's course for two miles, till he had wandered off his own lands into the outer borders of Clarencieux. He had now fairly lost his road, without being consoled by the grilse, which had broken away with the hook in its jaws; and he was looking out for a keeper to direct him. He detailed his adventures at much too great a length for Chandos, who, infinitely wearied, was still obliged to invite him to the house for luncheon, although he had long abstained from all intercourse with this peer of the new creation. Chandos was inexorably exclusive where intellect did not exist to induce him to break his law. The temper of his house had always been so, with that pride of the great noble, "Je ne suis ny roy, ny prince; je suis le Sire de Courcy;" though, where intellect was, he would willingly be as democratic as even Darshampton could have asked.

There was another cause, moreover, for little cordiality between them. Before the departure of Chandos for Constantinople, Lord Clydesmore had, as it was well known, offered his hand to the fair Queen of Lilies, and been refused; and he had attributed very justly the discarding of his own suit to the presence of his brilliant and careless rival, who

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would not even accept the glorious gift notoriously willing to be given him.

The Earl bore him indeed more grudges than this. Though he owned Lilliesford, so near on the same sea-board, he had never obtained entrance to the doors of Clarencieux; all his extreme wealth and all his new-gained honours could not avail to get him recognition from the master or from the guests there. But he had long vainly pined to dash his holy water with the essence of fashion's perfume, and he suppressed his grudges and his conscientious scruples against what he had been wont to term "a house of sin," to accept with satisfaction the distantly-made offer of luncheon from his rival; congratulating himself that those fair titled beauties, whom he had often called "coroneted courtesans" and "modern Messalinas," would now most likely send him "At home" cards, and that those whom he decreed would be damned in Eternity could not well damn him now while in mortal Mayfair. "That miserable *roturier!*" thought his Grace of Castlemaine, then on a visit to his grandson, drinking his wine angrily at the table, across which he saw Clydesmore bowing and addressing him blandly. The Earl was thinking that, after this meeting, the haughty old man must give him "Good day" in the drawing-room at White's. In a few years at farthest he knew the Duke must be roasting in the fires of Tophet; but meantime it was just as well to get rank from him by a nod before the fire in St. James's-street.

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Some dozen people beside the Duke had dropped in together for luncheon as Chandos took his titled trespasser into the dining-hall, among them Trevenna, who came in with a keen appetite after his morning among the outlying farms, where he had astonished the agricultural mind with his science in top-dressing, irrigation, cross-breeds, and mangel. But he stopped a moment over his fricassee to fire an unpleasant query straight at the Earl. He liked fricassees, but he liked still better setting any one at a discomfiture.

"Ah, my Lord! that little box of Forest Hill is close to you, isn't it? Is it true that the Chestertons are just down again there with that invulnerable beauty, the Queen of Lilies?"

Clydesmore coloured irritably, and darted a quick glance at his host, as he answered, not very lucidly, in the affirmative. He was aware that every one there knew that he had been rejected, and rejected for this thankless rival.

"Thought so," went on Trevenna, remorselessly. "Clever little fellow, Chess, to take that box. Capital coverts; first-rate game. More my lady's doing, though: she's lord and lady, both."

As there was nothing to be shot now, except rabbits, the double meaning of his words was obvious. Chandos, at whom not only Clydesmore, but his grandfather and La Vivarol as well had both glanced, gently glided in and changed the subject. Not even his rival could tell that it had interested him.

But that night, when he went to his own chambers

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from the smoking-room, the laughter of some of the men echoing pleasantly from the distant corridors as they bade each other good night, he opened first the door of his atelier, and went up to a Spanish picture hanging near his easel. It was a picture without any master's name, that he had picked up in one of the dark winding streets of Granada, pleased with its Murillo colouring, and yet more with its subject—a young Grenadine leaning from a moonlit balcony in the coquettish duty "*pelar la pava.*" There was more of proud melancholy grace than of coquetry in the noble, moonlit face; and it was strangely like the Queen of Lilies—so like, that one of her first charms for him had been her resemblance to his favourite Spanish portrait. He stood and looked at it some moments.

"I must see her to-morrow again, come what will of it," he thought.

As he moved away, with all the unrest of an eager and repressed passion tenfold on him with the knowledge of her presence near, his lamp shed its light full on a scarcely finished painting of his own upon a rest; it was a soft and deep-hued oil-picture of the Amphitheatre of Arles, with a cloudless sky above, and the lustre of a Provence sunset pouring from the west. It had been sketched in Arles itself, two years before. As he glanced at it, a sudden recollection crossed him, a sudden thought sent a flush over his forehead, a pang of anxiety to his heart; he

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paused before the painting. "*She* cannot be Lulli's Valeria?" he said, half aloud. "She never spoke of him; she never seemed to have had a living thing to care for except her own vain beauty. And yet she was an Arlésienne; she was of the age Valeria would be; she was very poor."

His memory travelled back to the past, far away, as it seemed, even by two years' space, and covered with a thousand other memories in his swift and brightly coloured life—travelled back to a time when he had loitered, in the vintage-month, in the old Roman city, passing on his way with the swallows to spend an Italian winter.

"I hope to Heaven not," he thought, with a keener pang than he had ever before known. "Even a thing as worthless as she should have been sacred to me if that great heart of Lulli's centred in her. They have never met; but it would be cruel work, for him and for me, to ask him. She was shameless before I saw her. It would be but worse anguish for him to find his lost Valeria in such as Flora de l'Orme."

And he went slowly out, leaving the darkness to fall over the Spanish portrait and the glow of the Provence sun.

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CHAPTER VI.

THE POEM AMONG THE VIOLETS.

THE portrait-gallery at Clarencieux was one of the noblest features of the whole castle. With its ceiling of cedar, its gold panels, its lofty arched windows, twenty in number, and its landscape beyond them of the home-park and hanging woods that stretched away to the sea, it would have been remarkable without its Vandykes, Holbeins, Lelys, Mignards, and Lawrences;—with them it was the idolatry of the virtuosi. Up and down it Trevenna, who certainly was no virtuoso, and could barely have told a Gainsborough from a Spagnaletto, sauntered the next morning, with his hands in his pockets, humming a Chaumière dance-tune, and reading his letters. He was a very prudent fellow, and did not trust the post with much of his business; what was important he generally did *vivâ voce*, and

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the man would have been astute indeed who could ever have trapped him into anything that compromised him by the amount of a fourpenny-bit. He had a very wholesome reluctance for signing his name, and any letters he ever wrote were of Spartan brevity. Yet this morning he had had a good many, and they all pleased him. Some were from the firm of Tindall and Co., written by Ignatius Mathias in Hebrew. Trevenna was a clever linguist, and had some half-dozen languages at his tongue's end, though he never confessed to knowing more than a very Anglicised, Palais Royal, Café-learnt French, which he would jabber villanously.

"Makes you look un-English to speak Parisian well," reflected this aspirant to be a representative of the British nation; and he would only let men find out by degrees even that he had a most scholarly culture in classics, making the concession for sake of college-men's prejudices, though at Darshampton he would not have had the truth whispered for worlds that he could pen quite perfect Ciceronian Latin.

From Darshampton, too, a mighty manufacturing town, where faces might be grimy, but heads were very clear, letters came that gratified him. He was beginning to be known there in their Unions and their Institutes—talked of there as a rising man, and as a rarely quickly witted one. He had felt his way there very cautiously; for he could not serve two masters, and be the Chicot of fashion and the De-

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mosthenes of labour, very well, in a breath. Both his masters would have given him his congé. But he was equal to greater difficulties even than those of playing the part of amuse eto his aristocratic patrons and that of pupil to his democratic inviters at the same time. He could make a club-lounger smile, and he could make a north-country operative grin; and he had not much fear of ultimately turning both to his purpose. For Napoléon himself had never more intense volition, Robert Bruce himself more patient perseverance, than this mercurial flâneur of Pall-Mall.

He had come here to read his letters, because no one ever wandered into the portrait-gallery save at such times as it was turned into a second ball-room, and, having finished them, he sauntered up and down, revolving their contents in his mind—a mind into which nothing ever entered but to be fertilised to its widest extent. Just above him, as he reached the end, was an alcove in which hung alone one Kneller picture, answering at the other end a Vandyke Charles the First, as grand a picture as the Petworth, given to Evelyn Chandos by his king himself. The Kneller was the portrait of the Last Marquis, who had joined the standard at Preston, and fought with Perth in the fatal left wing at Culloden, breaking his sword at the Prince's feet when the staff dissuaded him from a final charge for victory or death. The Marquis had been offered life and

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honours if he would have divulged certain Stuart secrets known to be in his hands, and rejecting the offer with a calm disdain, had died on Tower Hill with his mournful *moqueur* smile on his lips to the last, and bowed his graceful head upon the block with the motto of his race, "Tout est perdu, fors l'honneur."

Trait by trait, look for look, the Kneller portrait was reproduced in the features of his last descendant. The picture of the last Marquis might have been the likeness of the present Chandos. Trevenna looked up at it.

"Well, my lord," he murmured a little aloud, in that innate loquacity which talked to inanimate things rather than not talk at all, "there you are with your d—d proud smile, that he has got just like you to-day. So you began life the most magnificent man of your time, and ended on Tower Hill? That sort of difference between the opening and the finale is rather characteristic of your race. Perhaps you'll see something like it again."

The calm eyes of the portrait seemed to glance downward with a serene disdain. Trevenna turned on his heel, singing a chanson of the Closerie, and only wheeling round when he came opposite a portrait of a man in the gold robes of Exchequer: it was that of the famous minister, Philip Chandos, who had died like Chatham. "Ah, mon ministre!" apos-

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trophised Trevenna, "your son is a very brilliant personage, and yet

> Lord Timon shall be left a naked gull,
> Who flashes now a phœnix.

You were a great man; but you and I shall be quits for all that."

At that moment the door opened; Chandos entered the gallery. "What on earth are you doing here, Trevenna? I have looked for you everywhere. Are you turned connoisseur?"

Where he stood, under the Vandyke Stuart picture, in a velvet riding-dress, he looked so like the Kneller portrait of the last Marquis that even Trevenna almost started, though he was ready with his answer.

"I was reading my letters. This house is so full of people, that the library is as bad as a club-room. The betting's quite steady in town on the colt——"

"Certain to be. I came to speak to you of a note I have had this morning, amongst others, from Sir Jasper Lyle. He tells me the state of his health will compel his retirement from the borough. He acquaints me with it first, but he will resign immediately; his disease is confirmed, poor fellow. Now, as you know, the borough is almost wholly at my disposal; to my nominee there will be no sort of opposition—not because the people are not free to act, but because they are a quiet, thin population, who for generations have been used to receive their representative from my family——"

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"Free and enlightened electors," put in Trevenna, with a certain grim humour in the parenthesis; and yet his heart was beating quicker than it had ever beat. He divined what was coming.

"They have at least been better represented than metropolitan boroughs," said Chandos, with a touch of annoyance. "We have never supported a mere puppet or a mere partisan. We have given the little town to the cleverest man we could find; and my father represented it himself, if I remember, for ten years or more. What I came to ask you was, will you like to be returned for it?"

Looking at him, he saw the eager and exultant light flash into Trevenna's eyes, the sudden lightning-like upleaping of a long-smouldering ambition. The daring, aspiring, indomitable nature of the man seemed instantaneously revealed before him, from under the surface of social gaieties and jaunty bonhomie.

"Like it!" In that moment Trevenna felt too genuinely to have words ready to his facile lips. Political life had been the goal for which through years, when men would have called him a madman for such audacious follies, he had "scorned delight, and loved laborious days," with its set purpose before him, none the less steadily stormed because the golden gates seemed hopeless adamant to force. Of late he had said to himself that come it would—come it

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should. But now that it did come—the thin edge of the wedge which, once inserted, would open for him all the gates of position and power—the jester had no banter, the liar no lie.

"I thought you would," said Chandos, where they stood under the Stuart picture, with the proud eyes of the last Marquis gazing down on them from the far distance. "You are the very man for the Commons, and I should not be surprised if some day I come down to hear you unfold a Budget! Very well, then; we will put you into nomination immediately Sir Jasper's resignation is made known, and there is not a doubt of the result."

"But—would not you——" For once in his life Trevenna was almost silent, almost agitated. The great prize of his life had seemed to have fallen into his hands like a ripe fruit.

"*I!*" said Chandos, horrified. "Have you known me all this time only to ask such a question? They have begged me over and over again to stand for the town or the county, but I have always told them that, if I must suffer for my sins, I would prefer purgatory itself at once: I would rather be burnt than be bored! As for you, I really do believe you will enjoy serving on committees, going in for supply, darting in to save a count-out, and all the rest of it. So—it is a settled matter?"

"Really—on my life, Chandos, I cannot thank you enough." Even on Trevenna's face there came some-

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thing of a flush of shame, and into his voice something of the husky hesitation of conscience-moved restlessness; for one moment the contrast of this man's actions and his own struck him with a force that left him without his usual weapons. Chandos saw in this nothing beyond the reaction of a sudden and pleasurable surprise; he laid his hand kindly on the other's shoulder.

"Thank me by showing them in the House what my friend can prove himself! And, Trevenna, look here: do not think that, because you are returned through my influence, you are for a moment expected to represent my opinions. The borough is a quiet, colourless little place, that will ask you no questions provided you adequately attend to its sea-coast interests; you may do anything else that you like. I hear that you have lately been lecturing, or something, in the North—that you have been expressing views totally different to those you hear in my set; now understand once for all, I wish you to enter public life *entirely* unshackled. Choose your party, or remain an independent Member; act precisely as you deem most true and most wise. After living amongst us, I am not afraid you will join the Ultras in pulling our houses down over our heads, and in parcelling our estates into building allotments; but whatever you genuinely believe, let that be what you advocate in the House, as though neither I nor Clarencieux existed."

With these words he went out, to spare his presence

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to the man whom he had just assisted to the fruitage of his most hopeless ambition.

Trevenna stood still and silent, struck mute for the instant with the blaze of his rising fortunes, and moved for one fleeting second with a heavy sense of treacherous shame. "Damnation!" he said, in his teeth, "for five minutes I almost forgot to hate him!"

Half in shadow, half in sunlight, in the noontide of the day, sat the Queen of Lilies.

A cluster of tall copper beeches stood out before a dark screen of crag, and waved and tossed together in grand confusion, and wild as they had been in the days of the Druids, only broken here and there by the rush of some tumbling torrent. Under the beeches was a broken wishing-well, its stones covered with ivy, its brink overgrown with heaths and maidenhair and countless violets; here, some ten miles beyond Clarencieux, in this lonely forest-land of her brother-in-law's shooting-place, Lady Valencia sat in solitude, with the falling of the waters only mingled with the thrill of a nightingale's evening note poured out on the hush of the noon. In her most sovereign moments she had never looked so lovely as now, in the complete negligence, abandonment, almost dejection, of her attitude. She leant against the stone coping of the well, one arm resting

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on it, so that her hand, half unconsciously, played now and then with the green coils of leaves and grasses falling in the water; her head drooped slightly; there was sadness, almost melancholy in the musing shadow of her liquid eyes. A volume of "Lucrèce" lay at her feet; a water-spaniel waited near, wistfully watching for her notice. The melody of bird or river had no music on her ear: she was thinking very wearily.

Thus—she all insensible of his gaze—Chandos saw her.

He paused, checked his horse as he rode through a bridle-path hidden in foliage, wavered an instant, then flung the rein to his servant, bade him ride on, and went backward through the entangled meshes of the leaves, towards the ruined wishing-well.

His step made no echo on the moss; unseen, he noted the weariness of languor in the dreaming repose, the musing pain that darkened the eyes that gazed down absently on the purple wealth of the violet buds. "Does she regret me?" he thought; and at sight of that living beauty which had haunted him through Eastern cities and Italian air, the old soft, wayward, unresisted passion which had so often ruled him, yet never reigned more utterly than it was near reigning now, woke in all its force. He thought neither of penalty nor consequence, of wisdom nor of future; he thought alone of her.

The movement of his hand, as he put aside the red

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gold of the copper beech-leaves and the light spring buds of the young ivy coils, caught her ear; she lifted her eyes, and met the eloquence of his. She rose, with something almost hurried and tremulous in the dignity of her serene grace; her face flushed, her glance had a light in it he had never seen there; sudden surprise changed the calm of her delicate beauty to a new warmth and hesitation that lent a still fairer life. In that instant, as he saw her under the burnished gold of the arching sunlit leaves, he could not doubt but that she loved him.

"You have returned?" The words were low and unstudied, as though, in the surprise of his presence there, her proud tranquillity broke down.

"Ah! forgive me that I ever wandered away. Forgetfulness did not go with me."

He scarcely thought, he never measured what he said; he thought only of her loveliness, there in the shadows of the spring-time leafage; and the loveliness of women had always done with him what it would. He bent nearer to her, looking down into her eyes with a gaze that made them droop, and made her heart beat with a swift, uncertain throb, a vague gleam of hope. "My love, my love!" he murmured, thinking no more of the cost and issue of his words than he had thought when he had murmured such against the warm cheek of some young Eastern Odalisque, or gazing into the lustre of southern eyes under the Spanish stars or by the shores of Procida, "we must not part again!"

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The music of his voice stole upon her ear, charming and lulling her into its own trance of passion; the deep warmth of a hot flush stole over all her beauty, intensifying every delicate hue, like the warmth from the noon through the crimson leaves; and as he drew her into his embrace, with his kiss he bartered his peace, his honour, and his future: for it, in that hour of her power, he would have thought the world well lost. The violets blossoming, dew-laden, at their feet —flower of the poets, and crown of child-Protus' golden hair—were not more sweet than that first birth and utterance of love.

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CHAPTER VII.

THE POEM AS WOMEN READ IT.

BEFORE a fire (for she fancied or liked to say she was chilly, in those late April days that were well-nigh as warm as summer) Lady Chesterton lay sulkily reclining in her little boudoir, a little green-panelled chamber, chiefly noticeable for its collection of one of her passions—curious china—Rose Berri, Henri Deux, and every sort of Faïence that time had ennobled and rarity endeared. She was very sullen, very grave, very moody. She was bitter as gall in her own soul. The distant cousin she hated, because he had inherited her father's title, had been left a fortune that would enable him to raise the Ivors' peerage to its old glories, whilst her husband was so heavily in debt that the narrowest continental economy would not better him. This house that they had taken on their

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hands so vainly, with its shootings that had entailed so much expense, had served them no purpose. Lord Clydesmore was hopeless to attract again after his first repulse; other men were coy of her beautiful sister—a Marquis's daughter, and portionless. She herself loved show, wealth, magnificence, all the exclusivism of greatness in its greatest; and she was literally poorer than one of the gamekeepers' wives out in the park yonder—poorer, for the keeper's wife could accept her poverty, and the Peeress had to go to Court as a lady-in-waiting, and to rack her brains afterwards to stave off the milliner who sent her Court dresses.

"I wish I were one of those wretched women in the cottages in the woods," she thought. "They have to bake, and to scrub, and to slap their dirty children, and to pinch and screw, and live on pork and potatoes; but they are better off than I—they have nothing to *keep up!*"

It was a bitter truth, and she felt its bitterness to the utmost, where she sat, curled in the velvets and silks and luxury, that those she envied would have so envied "my lady," could they have looked on her in her solitude. She turned her head slowly as the door opened, glanced up with half-closed eyes, then returned to the moody contemplation of the fire. She had been a very miserable companion, a very gloomy tyrant, to her sister during this winter, when they had been mewed in leafless woods for nothing,

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with no dinner-party nearer than fifteen miles, hearing of that "odious man Trevenna's" men-parties at Clarencieux, and hopeless of ever seeing its lost lord return. Nor had the month or so of the town-season much improved her temper, now that she was back again for the recess.

Lady Valencia came up in silence till she stood before the fire; her black laces swept round her over a white morning dress—she wore that floating dead white as no other could—and there had caught across it, in unnoticed ornament, one of the long ivy-coils, with leaves of darkest, buds of lightest green.

"What a draught you bring in with you!" shivered Lady Chesterton, peevishly. "Good gracious! you are dressed as if it were summer. Take care, pray; you brush Dragée's hair the wrong way!"

Moving her skirts from the little lion-dog, Lady Valencia stood silent still; her sister looked up at her and wondered. The brilliance of the spring-tide seemed to have lingered on the Queen of Lilies; there was a new look upon her face.

"What has happened?" asked the Peeress, sharply.

She looked down on the Baroness with a certain haughty contempt. She owed her sister many a goading irritation, many a sneering taunt.

"Your sacrifice at Forest Hill has not been in vain," she said, calmly detaching the green ivy-spray from her dress.

Lady Chesterton started up in her chair, her black eyes all vivid animation.

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"Valencia! you do not mean that Chandos——"

"Yes," said the Lily-Queen, serenely still; but she turned her head with the lofty supremacy of a victorious queen; a proud triumph flashed in the velvet depths of her eyes; every line of her form, every curve of her lips, expressed conquest — "yes, we have won. I shall be mistress of Clarencieux!"

Had Chandos been there in that moment, he would have seen it were better for him that he should lie in his grave than that she should be so.

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CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE ROSE-GARDENS.

CHANDOS, as it was, could scarcely have said that the same triumph remained with him.

Waking to calmer reflection and recollection as he rode homeward, the price that he must pay for the words he had uttered, for the caress he had given, on an impulse of passion stronger than himself, stole to his thoughts with a chill. For marriage he had an utter distaste—of his liberty a surpassing love; the slightest bondage was unendurable to him. He had never had anything to consult except his own free will; and inconstancy in taste, in pursuit, in amusement, and in residence, had become his habit, if it were not his nature. To endure control, to have to tell his plans ere he followed them, not to go where caprice took him, unasked and unshackled, to have

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any companion with him through custom instead of inclination, or to have the same with him long together, all that some men take naturally, to him would have been intolerable slavery. It may be hence imagined that nothing could be more repugnant or less suited to him than marriage; and the thought of what he had done on the spur of an irresistible beauty and a vainly resisted love, weighed on him curiously as he rode through the aisles of pines and over the vast undulating sward of the outlying lands, with the sound of the sea from the distance, and in the sunny air the winged dwellers of the beach, the delicate tern, the rare hen-harrier, the ring-plover, and the mallard, flying above the wild thyme and the still moor-pools. His life had not a shadow: why had he not left it as it was? He loved her—he loved her with a great passion, that, through her beauty, swayed him like a reed; and yet a strange weariness, a strange depression, came upon him as he swept over the wild wolds. He felt as though he had surrendered up his future into bondage.

As he turned his horse into the home-woods, leaving the purple moorlands that were the sea-shore appanage of Clarencieux at a cross-road, one of his own hunters was spurred after him. Trevenna came up with him.

"How you do ride!" cried Trevenna himself, a good but cautious horseman, not caring very much for the saddle. "You will break your neck, surely, some

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day. How you took that gate! By the way, if you were to do such a thing, who is your heir? There is no other Chandos."

"The estates would go to the Castlemaine family; I have no nearer relatives," answered Chandos, a little wearily. Now, of all other times, he could have wished the incessant chatter of his Chicot far away.

"Ah, but you'll marry some time or other, of course."

Chandos gave a gesture of impatience: the word grated terribly on his ear. Trevenna glanced at him, and knew what he wanted. Through his reconnoitrer-glass he had seen the wishing-well, and the two who had stood beneath the copper beeches, and he wished to learn how far the affair had gone. The impatient gesture told him. He had studied every impulse and minutest trait of Chandos' character, till he could gauge his feeling and his meaning to the slightest shade.

"The ladies were upbraiding you loudly for your desertion, when I left the house. They had sauntered down out of their rooms to ride and drive, and were indignant not to have their host *en proie*," he went on, carelessly; he knew his companion too well to press the other subject. "As for me, I have been meditating on my coming greatness. Really, have you thought well of it, Chandos? Your friends will say you have put an adventurer in the House."

"They will not say so to me; and if they do to

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you, you can give them more than they send. Besides, you will have good company; did not they say so of Canning?"

"Then you are really resolved on lifting me to St. Stephen's?"

"Assuredly."

"Upon my word, monseigneur, you make one think of Timon's

> I could deal kingdoms to my friends,
> And ne'er be weary!"

"Timon! You choose me an ominous parallel. Would you all be 'feast-won, fast lost'?"

"The deuce! I dare say we should."

The answer was rough, but it was true as far as it went. There were times when Trevenna could not quite help being truthful. Lying invariably will become as weary work, sometimes, as telling truth becomes to most people; and there was a cynical candour in the fellow not always to be broken into training.

"I would trust you sooner not to be, Trevenna, for the frankness of that admission," said Chandos, right in his deduction, even if he should be wrong in this present instance. "Look at that glimpse of sea through the pines; how wonderful in colour!"

The deep blue of the sea-line glistened to violet beyond the dark-green boughs and the russet shafts of the pine-stems. The woods of the deer-forest stretched in rolling masses upward and inland; and

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beyond, tinged with the brightest light, stood the magnificent pile of the castle. Trevenna looked.

"Yes, very pretty."

"Good Heavens! you speak as if it were the transformation-scene of a ballet!"

"I like a ballet a good deal better. Clouds of transparent skirts are better than clouds of transparent mists. You are very fond of this place, Ernest!"

"It were odd if I were not. I can fancy how it was deadlier to the last Marquis than to sever from friend or mistress, when he had to look his last on Clarencieux."

Trevenna smiled, and flicked his horse thoughtfully between the ears, as they rode on in silence.

> "Thou givest so long, Timon, I fear me
> Thou wilt give thyself away in paper, shortly,"

ran the thread of his musings.

Trevenna's momentary pang of conscience in the morning had been particularly short-lived. It had died with the next look upward to the face of the last Marquis.

At that moment, entering on the clearer spaces of the home-park, where four avenues of gigantic limes crossed and met each other, one of the most singular beauties of Clarencieux, they encountered another riding-party escorting a little pony-carriage drawn by four perfect piebalds, and containing

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Madame de la Vivarol and a Russian Princess. Among the escort were the royal Duc de Neuilly, and another Duc, not royal, but an European notoriety all the same—Philippe François, Duc d'Orvâle. Philippe d'Orvâle was a character; Europe was given to saying, too, a very bad character. Chief of one of the great feudal races of France, now growing fewer and fewer with every generation, he was, so to speak, born in the purples, and had lived in them up to the time when he was now some fifty years of age. Exceedingly handsome, he still preserved his débonnair graces. Excessively talented, he could on occasion outwit a Metternich, a Talleyrand, or a Palmerston. Extremely popular, he was the prince of bons-vivants. With all this, Philippe d'Orvâle had achieved a reputation too closely allied to that of his namesake of D'Orleans not to be considered a thorough-going reprobate, and to care infinitely less for succeeding in the field of state-affairs and political triumphs than for succeeding in dancing a new Spanish cachucha, in brewing a new liqueur-punch at his *soupers à huis clos*, in dazzling Paris with some mad freak of exuberant nonsense, and in leading the demi-monde in all its wildest extravagances. He had a good deal in him of the madcap mixture that was in the character of the Emperor Maximilian, and, like him, scouted courts, titles, states, and dignities for some reckless piece of devil-may-care. He might have been anything he chose; but he, Duke

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and Peer of France, decorated with half the orders of Europe, descendant of nobles who had been cousins of Valois, and nephews of Bourbon and Medeci, did not choose to be anything except the chief of the Free Lances, and the sovereign patron of singers and ballet-dancers.

Certes, he enjoyed himself, and looked on at his gay world unsated out of his careless eyes; but his family thought him mad, and had, indeed, tried to restrain him from the control of his vast properties, till Duc Philippe, suddenly taking it into his head to show them he was sane, went to Vienna, and conducted a delicate *imbroglio* so matchlessly for France, that it was impossible to support the charge any longer, though, having so vindicated his sanity, he returned directly to his own courses, and was found at breakfast next day with three actresses from the Variétés, an inimitable buffo-singer from the Café Alcazar, a posture-dancer off the pavement of the Palais Royal, in whom he declared he had discovered a relative, and a Pifferaro's monkey seated solemnly in state in one of the velvet chairs, munching truffles and praslins; amidst the chorus of Rossini's *Papatacci*, sung by the whole party, and led by D'Orvâle himself.

A man who will set down a Barbary ape at his table, Europe, of course, will pronounce out of his senses; yet a more finished gentleman than Duc Philippe never bowed before a throne; and while Europe in a mass pronounced him the most hideous

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amalgamation of vices, two or three who knew him well, amongst whom was Chandos, steadily upheld that there was not an ounce of real evil in this bearded *bon enfant.*

John Trevenna, as far as dissipation went, was a perfectly irreproachable character, and had not really a vice that could be put down at his score. Philippe d'Orvâle was a very reproachable one, and had, beyond doubt, a good many; yet perhaps both Guido Lulli and Beau Sire were in the right when they shrank from the keen blue eyes of the one, and came up without fear, sure of a kindly word, under the sunny gaze of the other.

The next night there were, as commonly when the house was filled, theatricals at Clarencieux. The same Paris troupe which had gone to Constantinople were down here for the recess, reinforced by a new actress of the most enchanting talents, and by John Trevenna, who had the most inimitable powers of mimicry ever seen on a stage, and who now played in the first vaudeville, as an Englishman on his initiatory trip to Paris, in a manner that Arnal himself never eclipsed; and in the second most audaciously mimicked Lord Clydesmore in an interlude written by himself, till even the fastidious and sated audience he played for were in uncontrollable laughter, and even the ladies, his very worst foes, were of opinion that a person who could amuse them so well certainly deserved to go into Parliament, though he did come nobody

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knew whence, and had lodgings in town nobody knew where.

Trevenna showed his wisdom in playing the part of a Charles Mathews to this little bijou theatre, since by it he won over the toleration of his most inveterate and most inexorable foes.

The only guests, besides the thirty-five or forty people staying in the castle, were the Chestertons and Lady Valencia. Nothing had escaped, during the two days, of the victory the Queen of Lilies had achieved. Trevenna, the only one who guessed it, held his own counsel; and Chandos, apart from the aversion he had to giving the vulgarity of publicity to his love, felt that he had a slightly troublesome and embroiled task before him in breaking the intelligence to his fair tyrant, La Vivarol. There was sufficient mortification and irritation in the hearts of his female guests when they saw the rival they had believed hopelessly defeated enter the drawing-rooms of Clarencieux in all the perfection of her loveliness, and in all the evident restoration of her supremacy, without their knowing the bitter extent of her triumph. A prouder moment even the Lily-Queen had never wished for or dreamt of than when she first passed the threshold of Clarencieux into the mighty hall where Evelyn Chandos had marshalled his cavaliers, and knew that she was the future mistress of that royal place; than when she was met upon the great staircase as the Chandos only met their sovereigns,

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and knew that she was the betrothed wife of this brilliant darling of courts, this magnificent leader of fashion, whom the world had said no woman would ever so woo and so win.

Perhaps, indeed, as they passed from the reception-rooms to the dining-hall, and from the drawing-rooms again to the theatre, through the lofty corridors ceiled with cedar and hung with Renaissance decorations on which the first artists of Italy had of late years been employed, her glance too often wandered to the mere art-skill and costliness with which every yard of Clarencieux was filled—to the priceless pictures, to the delicate statues, to the gold and the ivory, the malachite and the jasper, the porphyry and the marble, the collections of a princely wealth and of a race eight centuries old. Perhaps she looked too much at these, the mere possessions of accident, the mere symbols of power; perhaps the higher, deeper, softer, treasures of the future she had won escaped her, and were less dear to her than these insignia of her lover's rank, her lover's splendour—perhaps. She had been in the bitter school of titled poverty; from her birth upward she had been so proud, and yet so penniless.

As they sat at dinner in the banqueting-hall, hung with scarlet and gold, with its ceiling arched above the sixteen Corinthian pillars of porphyry given by La Grande Catherine to a Chandos who had been ambassador at her Court, the Queen of Lilies, haughty

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as an empress, delicate as a young deer, pure and stately as the flower of her emblem though she was, appraised the grandeur of Clarencieux well-nigh with as critical a surety as Ignatius Mathias could have done, and looked less upward to where her lover sat, than opposite to where, above the sculptured marble of the mighty hearth, above the crossed standards of Evelyn Chandos and the last Marquis, of Edgehill and of Preston, there rested in a niche, all wrought in ivory and silver in a curious Florentine carving, the last coronet that had been ever worn by a Chandos—the attaindered coronet of Clarencieux.

"Amazingly like the last Marquis he looks to-night, by Jove!" thought Trevenna, standing behind the curtain of the pretty stage before it drew up for the vaudeville, and surveying through a chink the slope of the theatre filled with arm-chairs, without any partition into boxes, and all glittering with arabesques and gilding and chandeliers, where in the centre Chandos stood leaning above Lady Valencia's chair. "Well, there is a Tower Hill waiting for him too! Only my Lord, with his d—d proud smile, said, 'All's lost—*except* honour!' I guess his descendant will say, 'All's lost—*even* honour!' We must not strike till this election matter's over. That put me out of my calculations; and it's too good to lose. Only a little while longer, though, shall I play the fool to please his patricians, and monseigneur stand there owner of Clarencieux. *Après*——"

The bell rang a little chime; the curtain, exquisitely

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painted with a view of Pœstum, drew up. Trevenna sauntered forward to greet the Parisienne actress, in his character of Milord Brown-Smith, with a flow of inimitable nonsense, and an effervescence of animal spirits so mirthful and contagious that the most blasé of his audience were laughed into an irresistible good humour; and had his election depended on their votes, he would have been safe into his borough that instant. There were only two who, while they laughed, would have withheld their suffrage; they were the Duke of Castlemaine and Philippe, Duc d'Orvâle—the two who, despite the presence of women whose fair eyes had vowed him such soft fidelity, were the two in Clarencieux that night who loved Chandos the best.

Some faint perception that the tenderness borne him by the one he last wooed was not that with which he, with the fervour of an impassioned nature beneath his carelessness, had loved and been loved under southern and Asiatic suns stirred in him even that night. He had been hurried by her beauty into the *abandon* of a long-resisted passion; but of her heart, of her nature, of her thoughts, he knew nothing. He loved her as poets love, seeing her through the glories of his own imaginings; but he knew no more whether in truth she answered them than he knew what he had done for his own future when he had drawn her into its life with that caress which left him bound to her.

He had been spoiled by a world that had so long

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adored him; he had been used to the utmost gratification of every fancy, of every wish; he had been intensely loved by women, used to burning words, to southern passions, to lavished tenderness. In her there was some want that he vaguely missed, some coldness scarcely felt, yet ever there, which now in the first moment of his surrender to her passed over him with a chill. He knew that he had done a fatal thing; and the thought haunted him even in the gaieties of Clarencieux—even when for an instant he was alone with her, as he drew her from the ball-room into the conservatories, aisles of tropical blossom and vegetation glowing with the deep bronze of South American leaves and the scarlet of oriental fruits and flowers, the foliage of Mexico and the flora of Persia.

"Ah, my Queen of Lilies!" he murmured passionately, "you are fair as the flower they call you after; but are you as cold? You have not yet learnt what love really is: look into my eyes and read it there!"

His eloquent eyes burned down into hers, their deep and brilliant blue dark with the fire of passion, as he wound her in his arms and covered her lips with kisses.

She drew herself softly from his embrace, startled and flushed by the warmth of his words, by the ardour of a temperament beside which her own was as ice to the sirocco, as the moon to the sun.

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"Where is it that I fail?" she whispered; "how would you have me love you?"

There was a pang at his heart as he pressed her to his breast with a caress in which he strove to kill the chill doubt waking in him.

"How! My fairest, words are but cold interpreters; if you knew, you would not ask the question. How? Speech cannot teach that lore. I would be loved as I love—so only!"

"Ernest, pardon me," said the Duke of Castlemaine, as late in that dawn he met his grandson, both on their way to the smoking-room; "but your attentions were extraordinarily marked to Lady Valencia St. Albans to-night—almost too much so, since there are Princesses of the French and Russian blood in your house. If I were not sure——"

"Dear Duke, be sure of nothing." He spoke with a smile, but the smile had in it something that was almost mournful.

His Grace paused, wheeled round, and stared at him.

"Chandos! you cannot mean——" He stopped, unwilling to put his doubt into plain words.

"Yes; I mean what you are thinking of. I have said more than I can unsay. Let us drop the subject."

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An oath of the hot Regency days of his early manhood broke from under the white cavalry moustaches of the old nobleman, as he stood and gazed at his favourite descendant in the silvery light from the candelabra above their heads in the corridor. He had no need to ask more questions; he understood well enough, and the comprehension cut him to the heart.

"Good God, Ernest!" and there was an accent of genuine grief, as well as of amaze. "And you might have wedded royal women—Louise d'Albe, Marie of August, the Princess d'Orvieto; you might have claimed the hand of any one of them, but you declared that you hated marriage."

"I declared only the truth. Marriage I abhor; but her—I love."

The Duke ground his still strong handsome teeth with a fierce impatience; he knew that the Chandos of Clarencieux—libertines perhaps, epicureans always—had never let any earthly wisdom or law or plea stand between them and the follies of their hearts or passions.

"I knew she would do it, if she had the chance," he muttered. "To run after you here, to come into the country the instant you returned from Paris—indelicate, indecent!"

Chandos stretched out his hand.

"Hush, sir; *I* cannot hear such accusations. It was not her doing that she came; she has told me

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that she was strongly averse to it, the more averse because, as I may now confess for her, she loved me."

The Duke swept his hand over his snowy moustaches with a scornful, wrathful gesture.

"Need she have come, then? The daughter of Ivors can scarce be so utterly destitute of friends. She intrigues for you as markedly as any Flora de l'Orme, though in a different fashion."

Chandos turned to him, grave almost to weariness for the moment, but gentle as of old.

"My dear Duke, you know that I would not have a difference with *you* for the worth of Clarencieux; but you must not use such words in my presence of one whom you will hereafter receive as——my wife."

He paused before the last two syllables; he could not utter them without some pain, without some distrust. His Grace suppressed a deadlier oath; he loved Chandos with more fondness than he would have cared to confess, and he had, besides, the most superb instincts of thorough-bred courtesy.

"I beg your pardon," he said, with a bend of his stately head. "I have of course no right to comment on your choice or on your actions; but all I would ask you is, what will she recompense you for all you must forfeit for her?"

Chandos gave a half-impatient sigh, not so low but that it caught his grandfather's ear.

"It is useless speaking. It is not that I doubt your wisdom, or dispute your right of counsel; but

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what is done is done: let us leave a fruitless subject."

He moved on, and threw open the door of the smoking-room. The Duke loved him too well to say more, but he turned back abruptly, bade him good night, and went to his own apartment. Well as the gallant old man enjoyed the society of a younger generation, and welcome as he was to it by right of his grand intellect, his unquenched spirits, and his high renown, he had not the heart for it now; he felt, vaguely and bitterly, that the cloudless sunshine of fortune would soon or late desert the last Chandos left to Clarencieux.

Chandos himself that night smoked his favourite rose-water narghilé in the smoking-room, then sat down with Philippe d'Orvâle to écarté, closely contested, costly, and washed, now and then, with iced sherbet. They played while everybody else slept; then, as D'Orvâle went to bed, Chandos instead let himself out by a side-door that opened into the rose-gardens, and walked alone into the sunny, silent morning, with no other companion than Beau Sire.

With the temper of a voluptuary and the habits of a man of the world, there was blent in him as strong a love of nature and of all the beauty of forest and moorland, of the change of the seasons, and of the floating glories of the clouds, as the purest of the Lakists ever felt. In truth, he was many men in one,

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and to the apparent inconsistency it produced in his character were due both the versatility of his talents and the scope of his sympathies. His penetration was often at fault; he thought too well of men, and judged them too carelessly; but his sympathies were invariably catholic and true; he understood what others felt with an unerring surety of perception—a quality that invariably begets attachment, a quality that, in its highest development, produces genius.

He walked far, spending two hours in the forest and on the shore. The flight of a flock of sea-swallows, the toss of the surf on the yellow sands, the rolling-in of the great curled waves, the morning life of the woodlands, the nest-song of the thrushes, the poise of a blue-warbler above a river-plant, the circling sweep of an osprey in the air, all had their charm to him; not one of the sights and sounds of the spring day was indifferent to him, or unnoted by him. He loved to lay high prices on the cards in the excitement of a gaming-room, and he loved to lead the wit and wildness of a sparkling, reckless Paris night; but none the less did he love to stand and look over the grey calm expanse of a limitless sea, none the less did he love to listen to the laugh of a west wind through the endless aisles of a forest.

He strolled till past noon through his lands with the retriever alone beside him, then he re-entered the gardens by the same gate by which he had left them. In them he met, alone also, La Vivarol. He

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would very willingly have avoided the meeting. He knew how inexorable a tyrant the fair Countess had been: it was with difficulty that he had loosened her fetters at all, and the escape he had made had, as he was well aware, never been pardoned him. Of a scene, of anything approaching reproaches, recrimination, or a quarrel, Chandos had more than the common horror; it was one of the frailties of his nature to do anything on the face of the earth to avoid a "*mauvais quart d'heure;*" and now his conscience told him that he could scarcely complain if he had to endure one, even if madame were unaware of the lengths to which her rival's triumph extended. He advanced, therefore, with a misgiving.

"Ah, madame! good morning. It is very rarely you honour the outer world so early."

The Countess laughed as silvery a peal as that rung by her toy-dog's little bells.

"No, indeed. The dawn, and the dew, and all the rest of it, are charming in eclogues and pastorals, but in real life they are—a little damp! but to-day I did not sleep very well; my novel was dull, and the gardens looked tempting."

"Those who are so much the gainers by it will not quarrel with any caprice that brings them to you earlier."

La Vivarol laughed again a little contemptuously, letting an echo of sadness steal into it. This brightest Venus Victrix was very chary of her sighs, but

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on very rare occasions she could be mournful with an effect no other ever approached.

"My favourite rose-gardens," she said, glancing round them. "Their summer beauty is not yet come, though it is very near. *I* shall never see it."

"Madame! what can make you utter so cruel a prediction for Clarencieux?"

She let her long eyes, dazzling as a falcon's, rest on him, humid with a mist that he could almost have sworn was of tears.

"*Chut, mon ami!* A new queen will soon reign at Clarencieux, they say; can you pretend that I should be welcome then?"

There was a repressed melancholy in the tone more touching than spoken reproach. Like Trevenna, she had long studied and traced his most facile and most accessible weakness. She knew he could never be moved by recrimination; she knew he could be wounded in an instant by tenderness. He was silent a moment, startled and pained; he scarce could tell how to soothe away this bitterness to her.

"Believe me," he said, a little hurriedly, "whatever changes Clarencieux sees, you will ever be welcomed to it by me."

"And do you think that with these 'changes' I would come to it?" She spoke with a proud rebuke, a melancholy challenge, turning her eyes full on his. Not a woman living knew so well how to place a man in a wrong position, and close all gates of es-

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cape upon him, as Héloïse de la Vivarol. Chandos felt inconstant and cruel—felt as she chose that he should feel.

"However that be," she murmured, dreamily, placing him yet further and further at his disadvantage, as only a woman's tact can do, "*I* wish you every joy, Ernest, that earth can bring. Ernest! I may call you that still once more; the name will be for new lips in the future."

The tears shone, dimming her brilliant eyes; a touching and resigned reproach was in her tone; sadness was tenfold more intense, coming for once in its rarity upon the dazzling, victorious face of the sovereign conqueror. Chandos felt guilty, felt repentant, felt everything that she meant he should feel. His wiser judgment might have known that this was but the perfection of acting; but she did not let his judgment come a second into play; she moved him at once by his heart and by his sympathies. He took her hand, and stooped towards her.

"Héloïse, forgive me. I deeply regret—I did not know—at least if ever——"

He was about, despite all his consummate tact and his knowledge of the world and of its women, to do so rash a thing as to apologise to her for having deserted his allegiance! She stopped him.

"Say no more; the past is past. No one you have ever known will wish you happiness as I shall wish

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it. We are friends now, and ever will be. Another love usurps you: so be it. To me, at least, is left your friendship still. It is not too much to ask, Ernest?"

"Too much! It is yours for ever."

He spoke warmly, contrite, and surprised that she had loved him so well. She had never looked more lovely than in this sudden descent from her haughty and contemptuous gaiety of sovereign triumph to this mournful and wistful resignation. The pledge he gave her was one that he would never break, for it had been won from him in a moment of acute self-reproach, when he rebuked himself with having trifled too lightly with the peace of one who truly loved him, though he had wronged her by too long deeming that no real love could linger under the mocking worldly brilliance of her careless victories. "I never thought that she had loved me *so*," he mused, surprised and moved, when he had left her. She had led him by his feelings, and he had neither the keenness nor the suspicion in him to doubt that she betrayed him. To Chandos it was far easier to think that he had done a woman of the world wrong by thinking her too heartless, than to credit that she wronged him by masking a bitter passion that she felt, and assuming a gentle passion she did not feel. It was true, she loved him—in her reading of the word; but it was in such a reading that the night before, seeing her English rival's power, she had

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set her delicate teeth together, and sworn in her heart:

"I will have my vengeance! If it be twenty years hence, I will have my vengeance!"

And before twenty years she had it.

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CHAPTER IX.

THE WATCHER FOR THE FALL OF ILION.

"THEY tell me the Premier has pressed on you again the restoration of your title?"

The Queen of Lilies spoke, standing under those very palms in her sister's town residence, under which she had stood when she had first spoken the name of Chandos.

"Yes, my dearest, he has done so."

"And you accept?"

"No; I decline."

"Decline!" A dark shadow swept over her fair, serene brow. "Decline the peerage!—and why?"

"Why? For many matters. One, that what was robbed from us by the Crown I will not take from the Crown as a re-creation. The last Marquis laid his life down to preserve his honour. Athens

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would have given him a statue in her Altis; England, characteristically, gave him a block on Tower Hill. We have never condoned his judicial murder."

"Refuse the Marquisate to gratify the manes of a beheaded ancestor!—what quixotism!"

Chandos looked as he felt—annoyed; he was used to be deferred to, and the women he had loved had been playfully gentle even in their most imperious tyrannies. Besides, a deeper vexation smote him; this anxiety for his rank showed that his rank usurped her thoughts.

"Quixotism it may be; such as it is, it will always govern me; and I should have hoped one who loved me would strive to understand my feelings, as I would strive to understand hers."

He spoke gravely and gently; but she saw that she had made a wrong move—that he was both pained and offended.

"But why? tell me why," she urged, more softly. "Attaindered titles have been restored before now. Others have thought it very right."

"What others may do has never been my guide."

"I know!" The world followed him; she would not have contradicted him. "But—forgive me—I cannot see your motive."

"'Forgive' is no word between us, my worshipped one. But, to tell you my motives, I should have to tell you a long story. Suffice it, nothing—not even

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your prayer—would ever induce me to be made Lord Clarencieux."

"A story? Oh, you must tell it me!"

"Why, my dearest? We have a story of our own far sweeter than any chronicle."

"No, no. You have excited me now; you must gratify my curiosity."

She spoke caressingly, but in her heart were a keen irritation and mortification. She had set all the longing of her ambitious life upon his Marquisate. The word of a woman is command to the man who loves her; he smiled, looking down on her, and drawing her nearer in his embrace.

"You know the life and the death of the last Lord?—it is a matter of history. When he joined Charles Edward at Preston, he was the most brilliant man of his time, a wit, a soldier, a poet, a bel esprit, the friend of Philippe d'Orléans and Richelieu, the courtliest noble of his age. He had loved many; but he loved latest, and above all, a Duke's daughter, his betrothed wife. When he was flung into the Tower, as you know, they offered him not only life, but highest distinctions, if he would betray a state secret known to be in his possession. You are aware that he refused, in words which sent the Whig nobles who came to tempt him out of his presence like lashed hounds. Yet existence was unutterably dear to him. What think you the woman who loved him did?—she, a

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Court beauty, whom hundreds urged to forgetfulness and infidelity. All she craved from the Throne was permission to go to him in his captivity, being 'prouder,' as her letter sphrase it, 'to share his doom than to be one with the pomp and pride of emperors.' It was granted, and she was wedded to him one evening in the Beauchamp Tower. She lived with him there four months, while his trial languished on. They feared to murder him, for the Chandos were very powerful then; yet they thirsted like wolves for the great chief's blood. His name was like a clarion to all the gentlemen of the south. Through all those months she never left him for one hour, nor did one word ever escape her lips to urge him to purchase life at loss of honour. They took him from her side to the scaffold, one fair spring morning, to die, with a smile upon his lips, and those brief words, '*Tout est perdu, fors l'honneur!*' They say that, from the radiance of scarcely twenty years, she changed to the blanched and worn decrepitude of extreme age, in that hour of agony when the axe fell upon the neck her arms had wreathed in his last sleep. The son, to whom she gave birth afterwards, grew up to manhood, the estates saved for him by others' intercessions—never by her own. She made him swear never to accept the restoration of his father's title, since it would have been to give condonation to his father's murderers. He kept his oath inviolate; and

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it has been passed on from generation to generation. Now you understand why I will not accept the gift of my attaindered peerage."

The story had always had a strong and touching charm for women. Even Héloïse de la Vivarol, most careless, most heartless of young coquettes, had listened to it, looking at the Kneller portrait, with tears that started genuine and true into her falcon eyes; and even her mother, the Princess Lucille, that weary, hardened, war-worn, continental Bohemian of the Blood, had heard it in a grave, awed silence, and had turned slowly away: "C'est bien beau!—cet amour qui est plus fort que la mort. Je ne le comprends pas; mais c'est beau!"

Now the chastely-trained English beauty, in the purity and freshness of her youth, was less moved by it, understood it less, than the calumny-proof and evilly-accused Frenchwoman.

She listened, she smiled, she thanked him; but the history did not reach her heart. She felt, moreover, that after what he had now said it would be as useless to urge him to the acceptance of the Clarencieux Peerage as to urge on him some actual dishonour; and all the longing of her soul had been set upon that proud Marquisate.

He saw this, yet he tried not to see it; he thrust it from him with a pang. From a woman who had sought him for sake of the rank and dignities he

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brought her he would have fled as from a pestilence, let it have cost him what it should; yet he had wakened passion for him in her eyes, he had felt her lips meet his in lingering caresses, he had seen her face flush and her heart beat at his words or in his embrace. He believed that she loved him; for she seemed to have no law, no thought, no wish, no memory on earth, save him. And she was very beautiful: heavier sins than those he saw in her would have been forgiven and forgotten by any man for sake of that glory of youth and of loveliness which had ripened in the light of Roman suns, and seemed to have their lustre still upon it.

Her triumph, too, lent her a fresh splendour. The eyes of a woman are never so soft and so luminous as when they smile on the mortification of her own sex. A more bitter blow had never been dealt them than when her fair friends and foes learned that she had subdued one whose proverbial inconsistency had so long made his captivity hopeless; and in the humiliated jealousy, the defeated exasperation, which rankled in silence and wretchedness beneath the congratulations of the dainty ladies of rank who had sought him for themselves or for their daughters, and had failed, the Queen of Lilies found one of the dearest of her triumphs. All his feminine world was in a terror of amaze, of indignation, and of despair, when the rumour stole amongst them that the idol of their coteries had been won by the portionless daughter of Ivors. They

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could not believe it—they would not believe it; and when they were compelled to believe it from the tongue of Lady Chesterton, who floated about with the coolest ice on her lips, and the warmest exultation in her heart, that ever exasperated a score of vanquished acquaintance, they declared it, behind her back, the most disgraceful intriguing for him, and began to find out that "Lucrèce" was not so very splendid a work after all.

Demi-Monde were more openly in revolt and more frankly infuriated, yet comforted themselves more speedily. "*Il nous reviendra bientôt,*" laughed Flora de l'Orme. But the priestesses and vestals of the temples of the aristocratic and matrimonial Elis had no such consolation. The burnt-offering of Clarencieux and its appanages could only be sacrificed once on their altars, and they beheld it borne away by this unhonoured spoiler with an exceeding anguish, the greater that it perforce was mute. What wreaths of aromatic incense, what oblations of sacrifice, had been lavished and wasted!

There was not a single person of Chandos' acquaintance to whom the prospect of his marriage was not bitterly unwelcome—except, indeed, Trevenna, who seemed thoroughly content with it; at which other men wondered, knowing how valuable a place Clarencieux was to him, and how much benefit accrued to him from the careless and gay extravagance of his friend's unwedded life. "But then," they remarked, "Tre-

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venna's always such a good-natured fellow!" He had thoroughly earned this character. Did any man want anything, from a cigar to a hunting-mount, from a seat down to Epsom to an invitation for the moors, Trevenna would get it for him with the most obliging good nature—so obliging, that men never knew or noticed that the cigars were Chandos's, that the mounts were out of his stud, that the drag came out of his stable-yard, and that the Highland shootings were over his heather and forest. Good nature Trevenna held a very safe and excellent reputation. His talents and his shrewdness secured him from ever incurring that contempt, born of familiarity, which good nature is apt to beget; and it was a reputation, a she considered, that kept a clever man "dark," and secured him from every imputation of being "dangerous" or ambitious better than anything. No one ever suspects an embryo Drusus or Catiline, a lurking Gladstone or Bismarck, in the man of whom everybody says, "Most obliging fellow in the world—always do you a turn—uncommonly good natured!" When the blue-eyed, golden-haired Proconsul cracked his jests with Roscius, and lent his thousands of sesterces in reckless liberality, and offered his Cuman Villa to his boon-comrades, and played the witty fool, with roses on his bright locks, through the hot nights of roystering, devil-may-care, dead-drunk Rome, who feared or foresaw in the boon-companion the dread conqueror of Aphrodite's Temple, the great dictator of

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the Optiamtes, the iron-handed Retribution of the Marians?

"What ever possessed you to put that fellow into Parliament, Ernest?" asked the Duke of Castlemaine, in the window of White's, a fortnight after the recess, flinging down the paper, in which a quiet paragraph announced the retirement of Sir Jasper Lyle and the unopposed nomination and election in his stead of the nominee of Clarencieux, John Trevenna, now M.P.

Chandos raised his eyebrows a little.

"I put him in because he was fitted for it: not a common reason for elections, I admit."

The Duke gave a low growl in his white beard. "You think life is to be dealt with by bon mots and epigrams. I can't say the Lower House has much to thank you for in furnishing it with an adventurer!"

"It has much to thank me for in giving it a talker who can be logical without being long winded, and sparkling without being shallow, though possibly it won't see the obligation. It reveres the prosy, and venerates the ponderous."

"And if you had a little of its tastes, you would gain in safety what you would lose in brilliance. You set too much store on mere talent, Chandos."

"I err in an opposite extreme to most of my countrymen, then, Duke!"

"*Can* you answer one without a repartee?" muttered his Grace, grandly wrathful at an election from

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which he had done his best to dissuade his favourite. Prevent it he could not; he had no local influence in his grandson's county, and the little sea-coast borough within twenty miles of Clarencieux had almost as feudal an attachment to the mere name of Chandos as his peasantry and tenantry on the estates. The days of the last Marquis were not so far back but that living men could remember their grandsires relating the southern rallying round his standard; and the great fame of the late Minister was a thing beloved and honoured through the whole of that sea-board as a thing of personal and imperishable renown.

"To put an adventurer like that fellow in the House!" muttered the Duke, fiercely recurring to a pinch of his fragrant étrenne. "I confess, I am astonished at you, Ernest."

"I would never have believed it," chorused his son, the Marquis of Delaraine.

"I did not believe it," echoed the Earl of Pontifex. "When I saw the paragraph in the paper, I set it down at once as a *canard*."

"Preposterous!" murmured a noble Lord, who held the Foreign portfolio, from behind his morning paper.

"The ruin of the Constitution," sighed a colleague.

Chandos listened a little impatiently for his usual temper, and shrugged his shoulders ever so slightly.

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"I am very sorry if the matter disturb you, but really I fail to see the occasion. I confess, it seems to me less damaging to put a man into the Lower House who has every promise for the vocation, except money, than to admit so many, as is now the custom, because money is the only recommendation they possess!"

With which concise retort on his and Trevenna's censors, Chandos absorbed himself in a new novel. The Duke, who might blame one whom he loved more dearly than any other of his kith and kin himself, but would never endure to hear him blamed elsewhere, laughed and turned to the Foreign Secretary.

"Tell your rising men to look to their laurels, Pendragon; this fellow, now he *is* in, will cut some work out for them. 'Eh, sirrah, and ye're na quiet, I'll send ye to the five hundred kings in the Lower House: I'se warrant they'll tame ye,' said James the First to his restive charger. I don't think there will ever have been one of the 'five hundred kings' more likely to reign paramount, someway or other, than this very outsider, John Trevenna."

His Grace was a world-wise Nestor of all councils and battle-grounds, and, despite his aristocratic prejudices, judged the audacious outsider correctly.

The election had been conducted very quietly; there had not been the slightest attempt at even a threatened opposition; as Trevenna said himself, he "took a walk over." Chandos was the idol of the

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whole country-side, and, for sake of his great father's memory, no wish of his would have been opposed in his county. He proposed the new Member in a few words, which sent a thrill through all his elder auditors; for the voice was the same clear, rich, irresistible voice—essentially the voice of the orator—which they had used to hear as Philip Chandos's. They had often wished and besought him to represent them in person; but he knew his own character better than they knew it, and had invariably declined. Without any murmur, they took the candidate he proposed to them. The only persons who could have opposed the Clarencieux nominee, on the score of the Conservative creed so long held by the Clarencieux house, namely, the few people in the borough who loved change, or studied politics enough to be Whig (and they were very few), Trevenna himself had conciliated. That part of his canvassing he had done alone, unknown indeed to Chandos; and it was a study in itself, the masterly manner in which, abstaining from any avowal of Darshampton politics, such as would have startled out of their wits the old Tory burghers, whose only creed was the creed professed at Clarencieux, he still managed to dine his few Whig allies, to chat with them in inn-bars, to smoke with them cheerily in their back parlours or their sombre "best rooms," to win them all over to a man, and to leave them with the profound conviction that he only coalesced with their opponents in order that he

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might ultimately advance and support their own opinions. Trevenna was a capital posture-dancer in social life, and here achieved the proverbially dangerous feat of sitting on two stools with triumphant address and security.

Still, not here by his own tact, but by Chandos' assistance and friendship alone, did he accomplish the commencing ambition of his life, to pass unchallenged the doorkeeper of St. Stephen's, and take his place upon the benches with the "five hundred kings."

Trevenna was in no sense an impressible man, and assuredly not an imaginative one; he would have strolled through the Birs Nimrud or the broken columns of Jupiter Ammon, with the sun full on the glories of the ruined temples, and would have cracked a ginger-beer bottle and wished for a *Punch*; he would have stood in St. Peter's in the gloom of the Crucifixion-day, while the "Miserere" wailed through the hush and the twilight, and would have amused himself like a schoolboy with letting off a bunch of crackers undetected, to bang and sputter on the solemn silence; he was essentially a "realist," to use the jargon of the schools, and a very jovial realist too. Yet even he, little given to being touched or impressed as he was, felt a certain proud thrill run through him, a certain hushed earnestness fall for a moment on him, as he first walked down the House and took his place in the assembly that John Eliot suffered for, and every tyranny since has feared.

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As he seated himself in the Commons, men noted that he was unusually quiet; some thought that this town-gossip, this dinner-wit, this idler of the Park and clubs, was conscious of being out of his element, and felt his own superficial cleverness useless and frivolous in their great congress; one or two thought, noting the clear keenness of the eye, the meaning of the well-built brow, and the bright, indomitable firmness of the lips, that he might be rather, on the contrary, measuring and maturing his strength against the future; and these were the deeper, surer-sighted of his observers.

Yet even these could not guess that, as he entered the Lower House, Trevenna's first glance went to the well-known place where the majestic stature and the grand bearing of the famous Minister, Philip Chandos, had been wont to rise in all its dignity to quell a tumultuous opposition, or to lead a patriot movement for the honour and in the name of England; and his first thought was, "Monseigneur, here am I at last in your own throne-room, where you reigned and ruled so long. Ah! I may even hold your sceptre some day, when your brilliant son has died in shame and exile, and the very place of his grave been forgotten."

So, quietly and unostentatiously, with good taste, as even those who begrudged him the elevation were constrained to admit, not altering his manner nor his mood because he had gained this social status, giving

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men no touch, as yet, of his quality and his power, training himself wisely, sedulously, and well, and caring little to be noted at present for anything beyond his punctual and steady attendance at the House, Trevenna entered on his parliamentary career.

At the same time with his own, a very different ambition and aspiration were forwarded and fructified by Chandos.

The opera, *Ariadne in Naxos*, was completed, and after Easter, through his influence, and chiefly, indeed, at his expense, was to be produced with every magnificence in the presentation, and every assistance in the artists that could be procured at any cost. On it hung the very life and soul of the musician, Lulli. The idealic ambition of the French cripple was as intense in its absorption of him as Trevenna's realistic ambitions were of him; each was literally and equally governed by ambition: the difference was, that one worshipped Art, the other only coveted Success. Lulli would have expired in rapture if, perishing in want and misery, he could have known that the world would treasure his works; Trevenna would not have given a rush for a fame that should have excelled Cæsar's, Aristides', or St. Paul's, if he had not dined well and drunk well while he lived. Dreaming in his solitary room, the visionary, whose infirmities shut him out from every joy and hope that filled the lives of his fellow-men, had created things as glorious as ever issued from the thoughts of Mozart or of Meyer-

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beer. In self-reliance most helpless, amongst men weak as an ailing child, so ignorant of all worldly ways and wisdom that an infant of six years might have laughed him to scorn, Lulli, in his own domain, was a king, and from the twilight of the aching brain, which looked with so touching a pathos, with so bewildered a pain, out of the dreamy depths of his sad eyes, music had risen in its grandest incarnations, poems of eternal meaning had been garnered, beauty that would haunt a listening world, and stir it from its sloth into a pang of some sublimer thought than daily toil for greed and gain, had been born in supreme perfection.

When will men learn to know that the power of genius, and the human shell in which it chances to be harboured, are as distinct as is the diamond from the quartz-bed in which they find it?

The *Ariadne* was the crown of Lulli's life; it was the first-born of his brain, the darling of his thoughts, the fruit of many a long summer day and winter night, given in untiring love to the work of its creation. By it the world was to decide whether this cripple's dream of fame was vain as "the desire of the moth for the star," or whether, when his existence had passed away from the patience and the pain of its daily being, the legacy he left would be upon the lips and in the hearts of thousands, with the legacies of the great masters.

The day approached at last for the trial; scarcely

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three weeks since Chandos had bartered all the liberty of his future in one caress among the spring-wealth of the violets. Was it well lost? He thrust the question from him unanswered, and gave himself up to the sway of his new passion unresistingly. He had never known sorrow; how could he well know fear? He lived in a ceaselessly changing succession of amusements, in which there was no pause for doubt, no moment for foreboding; he only felt that she beguiled him more with every glance her eyes gave his; he was only conscious of the impatience of a love which every hour that kept them severed heated and enhanced. Now and then, in truth, he felt as he had felt at Clarencieux—that he was not loved as he loved; now and then the serenity of her nature chilled and chafed the fervour and the passion of his own; but the time was brief. They met in the pauses of pleasures which banished thought from him; and the touch of his kiss, the eagerness of his prayers, the impassioned warmth of his worship, woke the semblance, if not the reality, of response in her. No woman could have had his eyes look into hers and have remained cold to him. The only thing that ever rankled in his heart, and touched him at times with a pang of dread and almost of aversion, was the intensity of the disappointment she could not disguise at his refusal of the peerage offered him. As often as she could venture (for devoted as he was to her, and infinitely gentle as was his manner to all women, and above all to her, she felt that this

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was a point on which he would not endure pressure), the Lily-Queen recurred to the rejection of the Clarencieux Marquisate, and showed herself unreconciled either by his wish or by his history to the loss of that splendid coronet. It was subtilely done, with feminine grace and tact, and with the high-bred delicacy which Lady Valencia could no more have departed from than the antelope could lose its elegance; but the thought was ever there with her, how to surmount the invincible objection which alone, through motives as they seemed to her of such sheer quixotism, stood between her and the proffered title: and he felt, better than he could have defined, the predominance which his rank, his wealth, and his fashion held with her, far over his love and her own. Now and then he felt this so strongly that a passionate regret seized him for the fatal opportunity which had led him away to resign his fate and future to her; but—he loved; he had never been overtaken by calamity; he was of a nature on which presentiment could assume no hold; he flung the fear off him, and forgot it, stooping to take the soft touch of her lips.

"I suppose before long, Trevenna, you will renounce *my* exchequer chancellorship and begin to prepare yourself for the nation's?" laughed Chandos the evening before that on which the *Ariadne in Naxos* was to be presented. "I cannot hope to keep you as my financier now that you have parliamentary

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affairs in earnest to work at; still, you must give me notice when you mean to resign. The vacancy will be hard to fill."

Trevenna laughed also.

"I confess, I pity my successor, as far as finances go; though it is a very good office for perquisites, it is something tremendous for expenditure. By the way, have you any idea what you *do* spend, Chandos?"

Chandos carelessly shook together the diamonds on a fancy-dress as he made his toilet for a fancy-ball at the Princess Anna Miraflora's, standing in his dressing-room, while Trevenna, after dining, as was often his wont, off Dubosc's masterpieces all by himself, while his host was dining at the Austrian Embassy, chatted with him now before the one went to his bal costumé at the Princess's, and the other to look on at the political costuming and posturing of a debate.

"An idea what I spend? No. I always tell you, knowing the price of things spoils them."

"But not knowing the price of them may chance to spoil *you*."

Chandos laughed.

"Très-cher, I am spoilt—have been ever since the great ladies gave me bonbons when I was two years old. I don't deny it; but then it's very pleasant."

"Very, no doubt. I never tried it. But in sober seriousness, Ernest, do you guess what your expenses are?"

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"'Sober seriousness!' What an invocation! Decidedly the House is disagreeing with you, Trevenna, and you are imbibing its professional dulness. Give the benches your estimates, please; don't try my patience with them. By the way, though, you are my finance minister still; will you tell my lawyer to draw up Lady Valencia's settlements immediately, and see to the matter altogether yourself for me?"

"With pleasure. What instructions——"

"That is just the point! Save my having to give any. Meet Chess to-morrow, and do whatever he wishes. I only give you one injunction," added Chandos, dropping his voice so that his attendants could not hear; "arrange them so that Lady Valencia can never feel she has not brought me a fortune as large as my own, and draw them up as you might have drawn them for a Princess in her own right."

"As I should have done if you had followed the Duke's counsels. But, as for these settlements, I should be glad of a little graver talk with you. Can you not stop half an hour?"

"I! I am fearfully late as it is; and I have promised Princess Anna to be in time for the Louis Quinze quadrille. Besides, I know what your graver talk means. My dear fellow, go in for supply, and attend committees, if such be your taste; but, for pity's sake, spare me legalities and finance. Settle what *they* wish upon her; I cannot give you a wider margin."

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"Wide enough!" said Trevenna, grimly. "I wonder what would be left you if my Lady Chess filled it up! But that is not all, Chandos. Indeed——"

"Indeed, the 'all' then must wait for a better season," laughed Chandos, shaking the jewelled hilt of his rapier into its place; he was dressed as the Duc de Richelieu; while the Queen of Lilies would represent the Duchesse de Berry. "The Princess would never speak to me again, if I were to ruin her quadrille by my absence. Good-bye, my dear fellow—and don't learn gravity from St. Stephen's: I am sure you see a perpetual comedy *there*."

Trevenna looked at him as he swept out of the dressing-chamber, with the Clarencieux diamonds glittering at every point on the lace and embroidery, the black velvet and azure silk, the gold and the silver, of his dress of the Bourbon Court.

"Go to your last night, monseigneur," he thought. "A week, and those diamonds will be for sale. You want settlements—well, you shall have them. The pear is ripe; it shall fall. Take a reprieve for to-night; nothing loses by anticipation. Ten years!—a long time. On my life, I feel rather like the watcher who looked out from his watch-tower through a whole decade to catch the first red light of the leaping flames. Ten years!—a long time; but Troy fell at last."

With which memory of the days of his school-desk hexameters, Trevenna sauntered out through the

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luxurious sleeping-chambers, past the waiting valets, and down the staircase to his night-cab, and drove on to the House, where he had already been in attendance from four to eight, and where there was a protracted though not important after-dinner debate.

Before he went to the body of the House, however, he turned a moment into the library, and wrote a little note, which he sent out to his groom to post.

It was addressed to Ignatius Mathias, and was condensed in one word—

"Act."

END OF VOL. I.

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